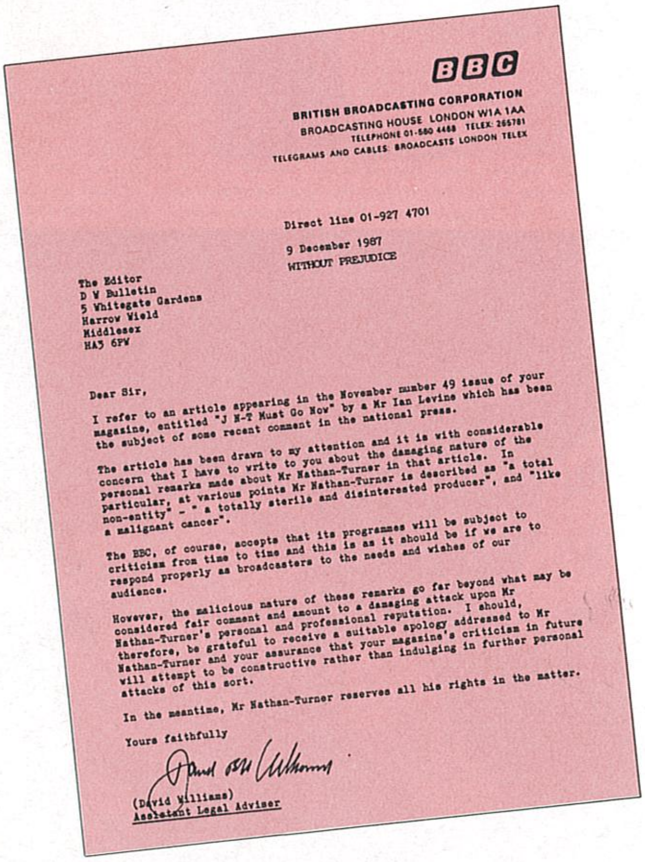
dwb

51 January '88

BBC SOLICITORS ACT FOR JN~T



BBC
BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION
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9 December 1987
WITHOUT PREJUDICE

The Editor
D W Bulletin
5 Whitegate Gardens
Harrow Wield
Middlesex
HA3 6PW

Dear Sir,

I refer to an article appearing in the November number 49 issue of your magazine, entitled "J N-T Must Go Now" by a Mr Ian Levine which has been the subject of some recent comment in the national press.

The article has been drawn to my attention and it is with considerable concern that I have to write to you about the damaging nature of the personal remarks made about Mr Nathan-Turner in that article. In particular, at various points Mr Nathan-Turner is described as "a total non-entity" - " a totally sterile and disinterested producer", and "like a malignant cancer".

The BBC, of course, accepts that its programmes will be subject to criticism from time to time and this is as it should be if we are to respond properly as broadcasters to the needs and wishes of our audience.

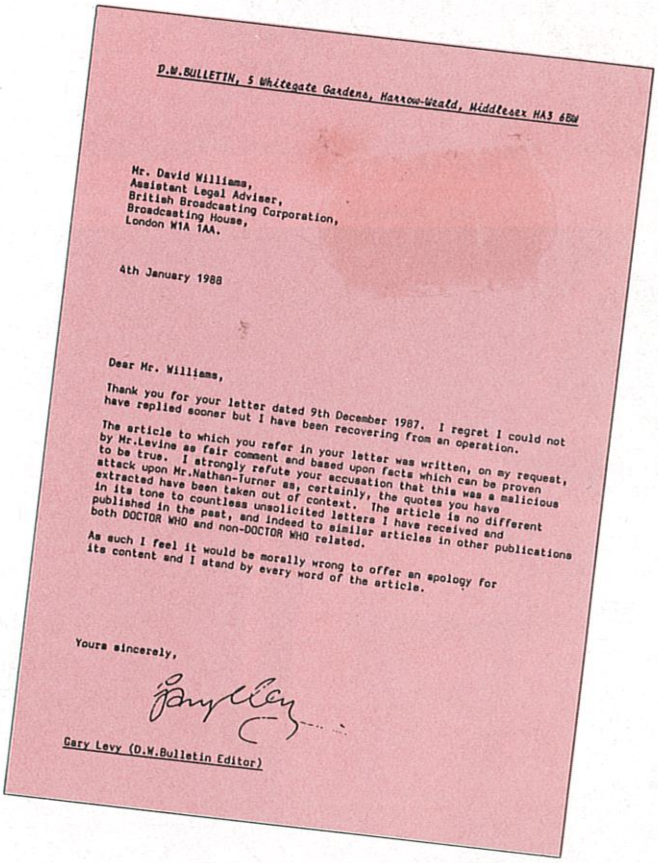
However, the malicious nature of these remarks go far beyond what may be considered fair comment and amount to a damaging attack upon Mr Nathan-Turner's personal and professional reputation. I should, therefore, be grateful to receive a suitable apology addressed to Mr Nathan-Turner and your assurance that your magazine's criticism in future will attempt to be constructive rather than indulging in further personal attacks of this sort.

In the meantime, Mr Nathan-Turner reserves all his rights in the matter.

Yours faithfully

David M Williams

(David Williams)
Assistant Legal Adviser



D.W.BULLETIN, 5 Whitegate Gardens, Harrow-Weald, Middlesex HA3 6BW

Mr. David Williams,
Assistant Legal Adviser,
British Broadcasting Corporation,
Broadcasting House,
London W1A 1AA.

4th January 1988

Dear Mr. Williams,

Thank you for your letter dated 9th December 1987. I regret I could not have replied sooner but I have been recovering from an operation.

The article to which you refer in your letter was written, on my request, by Mr.Levine as fair comment and based upon facts which can be proven to be true. I strongly refute your accusation that this was a malicious attack upon Mr.Nathan-Turner as, certainly, the quotes you have extracted have been taken out of context. The article is no different in its tone to countless unsolicited letters I have received and published in the past, and indeed to similar articles in other publications both DOCTOR WHO and non-DOCTOR WHO related.

As such I feel it would be morally wrong to offer an apology for its content and I stand by every word of the article.

Yours sincerely,

Gary Levy

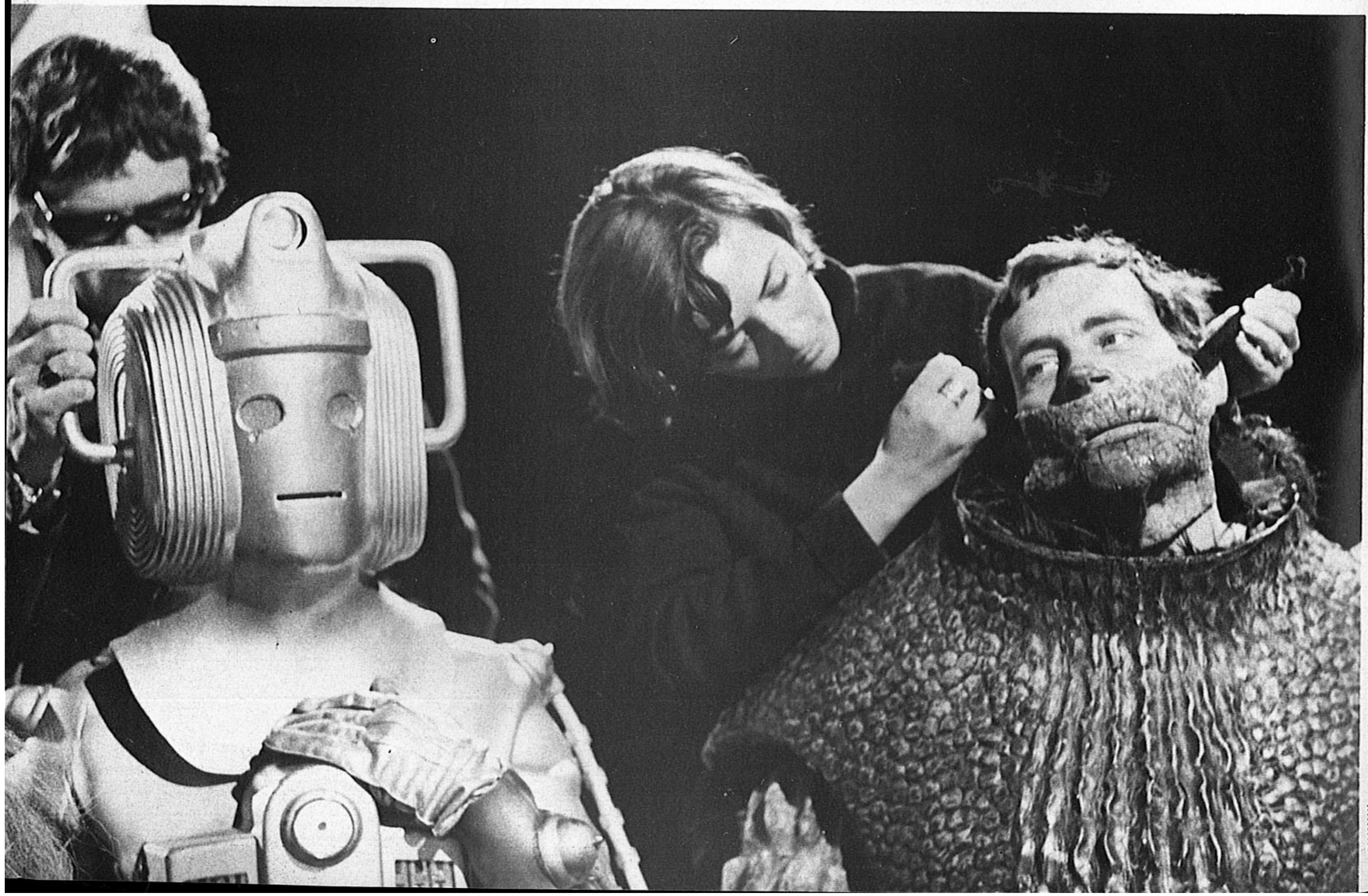
Gary Levy (D.W.Bulletin Editor)

WITH JOHN NATHAN TURNER SEEMINGLY CEMENTED IN TO HIS producer's seat for his 9th year on DOCTOR WHO (the series' silver anniversary year), D.W.B.'s campaign for better standards for the series will nonetheless continue - despite pressure from the BBC to abandon our "malicious" (sic) criticisms of Nathan-Turner. This surprising move came last month when we received this letter (above left) from Mr.David Williams of the BBC's legal department and we subsequently responded - after advice from several 'authoritative' parties - earlier this month (above right).

Although the BBC's letter states that Nathan-Turner "reserves all his rights in the matter" - meaning he could decide to take action and sue if he can prove his reputation has suffered through defamation of character - we believe such an action would be unlikely as it would undoubtably result in enormous press publicity and subsequent pressures

(CONT'D PAGE 3...)

DOCTOR WHO MOVIE NEWS~PAGE 4



5 Whitegate Gardens,
Harrow Weald.
Middlesex. HA3 6BW

BBC SOLICITORS ACT FOR JN-T — *Cover, 3*

Is the strain getting too much for John Nathan-Turner ? The BBC's most criticised producer - with perhaps up to now the most impregnable ego to match - finds he has allies within the BBC itself...

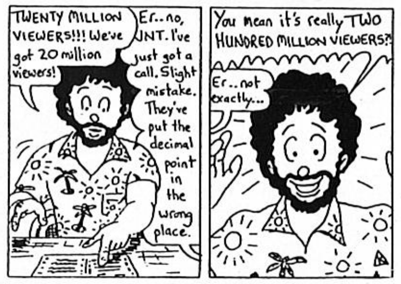
20 YEARS AGO — *2*

The much-troubled 6th Season entered production in 1968. Desperate for storylines, the production team eventually ended up with two of the longest stories ever; the 8-part INVASION (originally '...of the Cybermen), and the 10-part THE WAR GAMES (the still shows Roy Pearce and Tony Harwood being made up as a Cyberman/Ice Warrior respectively for their brief nostalgic appearance in Patrick Troughton's final episode.

NEWS — *4 - 5*

Latest ratings, movie news, Target's 1988 line-up, Jonathan Powell's response to OPERATION WHO...

(cartoon by Kenneth Horlock from issue 4 of the zany 'zine Star Begotten obtainable through the advert on 35 of last month's D.W.B.)


TWENTY MILLION VIEWERS!!! We've got 20 million viewers!
Er..no, JNT. I've just got a call. Slight mistake. They've put the decimal point in the wrong place.
You mean it's really TWO HUNDRED MILLION VIEWERS?!
Er..not exactly...

LETTERS — *6 - 7, 12*

Your reactions to OPERATION WHO, Did You See...? and last issue's Sylvester McCoy interview.

INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS — *8 - 11*

When D.W.B. evolved in to its glossier image (circa #9), we also expanded our news-dominated content to include interviews which, over the years, have achieved the reputation of being second to none and have become one of D.W.B.'s leading assets. Our readers trust our interviews to be genuine and know we won't leave any stones unturned with our rigorous interviewing technique, so join us as we look back at many of our interviewing highlights from our first 50 issues (this month: D.W.B.#s 9 - 39).

DOCTOR WHO's DARKEST HOUR ? — *13*

A look at The Daily Telegraph's suspicious coverage of OPERATION WHO and DOCTOR WHO's 24th anniversary.

DRAGONFIRE COVER: Edward Peel (Kane), Elizabeth Spriggs (Belazs) — *14 - 15*

We examine the final story of the disastrous 24th Season which saw a minimal move towards more traditional DOCTOR WHO values.

CMS's IN·VISION — *16*

This exciting new project is launched this month - order your copy NOW !

could force Nathan-Turner to resign from the BBC altogether (contrary to previous reports, Nathan-Turner is still on the BBC staff which explains why the BBC are still standing by him no matter what his reputation might be). Most of the popular press have already pledged their support for our campaign, and in the light of recent troubles engulfing the BBC, would no doubt lap up the potential scandal of a public-owned corporation attempting to sue their viewers for daring to highlight the spectacular decline of their former television institution and suggesting possible solutions for a revival.

But apparently, it appears, DWB isn't the only area where Nathan-Turner has allegedly been keeping the Beeb solicitors busy lately. DOCTOR WHO Monthly writer and well-known fan Gary Russell - who interviewed Nathan-Turner for the December issue of the magazine - recently publicly stated that the BBC solicitors ordered the Did You See...? team to cut all unfavourable comments concerning Nathan-Turner in their recent film supposedly examining the decline of DOCTOR WHO in recent years. As many readers have noted, the televised version gave the erroneous impression that the series itself was to blame for its decline rather than pointing the finger squarely at Nathan-Turner, and presumably the BBC were content to screen this version since it implied that DOCTOR WHO itself has run its natural course and so would add fuel to their plans to axe the series once and for all after its 25th anniversary.

Whatever the case, there can be little doubt that the BBC are protecting Nathan-Turner and are determined to ensure he produces the next (final ?) series. It therefore doesn't seem unreasonable to suggest that they know, as we do, that Nathan-Turner is - and has been for a few seasons now - hopelessly inadequate at producing DOCTOR WHO to the formula originally devised by Sydney Newman. Subsequently, it also doesn't seem unreasonable to speculate that they are keeping him there because they no longer have the remotest interest in the series itself (although the substantial revenue it provides the BBC with is enough to keep it ticking over on 14 trashily-produced episodes each year), probably because most of the 'old guard' of the BBC (Milne, Cotton...) have all but gone and so they can't recall a time when DOCTOR WHO was as essential a fixture in the BBC's line-up as The Queen's Speech on Christmas Day.

They know as we do that keeping Nathan-Turner on DOCTOR WHO is guaranteed to result in appalling television and likewise appalling ratings - which are the reasons they will be able to cite with the minimum of fuss when they drop the show after the next series.

By attempting to impose a blanket ban on D.W.B. for attacking and exposing the BBC for these disgustingly underhand tactics is hypocritical in the extreme. Wasn't it the BBC's Head of Governors - Marmaduke Hussey - who only recently launched a scathing attack on the British Government (Open Air, January 4th) for being too sensitive in slapping injunctions on every BBC programme they feared might expose some of their own possibly dubious activities ?

If John Nathan-Turner can't stand the heat - and the consequences of his atrocious production values - then he should leave DOCTOR WHO forthwith !!

DON'T FORGET - WE'LL BE BACK IN MARCH !

Happy New Year ! Having recovered from the festivities, D.W.B. 'should' be taking its annual leave next month (February). When I say 'should', there is a very slight possibility that there might be an issue next month after all and we could, instead, take March off, so keep an eye on your local sci-fi shop's bookshelf or your doormat just in case ! However, the former will probably be the case so expect your March issue later than usual and please don't start enquiring about non-receipt of D.W.B.#52 at least until the end of March.

Apologies to everyone who incurred a delay when ordering D.W.B. in mid-December. This was due to myself being out of action for a week but I'm now fully recovered, which is more than can be said for the poor old $US at the moment ! Regretfully as a result of its continued decline against the pound I must ask all American readers who have (re)subscribed to forward an extra $5 in addition to the $42 already sent. This is a most unfortunate situation, but hopefully the US economy will soon be back on the rails. Incidentally US interest in D.W.B. (no less than one in three readers !) is such that I feel this should be reflected more in our content, so from next issue Kathleen Toth, our US correspondent, will return with her regular column of what's what and who's who Stateside.

And with the Season 24 reviews and our comic-strip adaption coming to an end this month, we are on the look-out for new ideas to fill the gaps so be sure to participate in our 1987 Readers Poll (form next issue).

Many readers have written in enquiring how they can obtain vintage DOCTOR WHO video copies with some even offering a financial incentive. Sadly I do not have the time or the suitable contacts to help with such a request, and unfortunately it is a fact that unless you are a friend of someone with a vast collection of videos then your best chance of seeing the old non-BBC Video stories is at conventions. Please may I warn everyone that it is a gross infringement of copyright to 'buy' tapes and the BBC will rightfully come down like a ton of bricks - as they did recently - on an unscrupulous fan who was blatantly distributing a list of his video collection complete with prices depending on each story's classic status, generation of copy etc.!

Finally this month, the winner of November's Puzzle Corner is US reader Sean Pickett who came up with the correct answer: MAWDRYN UNDEAD (the sequence contains the premier story of each of the Doctor's male companions). Till next issue - GARY.

D.W.B. AD RATES (Fan): 1 page(A4 camera ready)£33, ½ page(130 x 390mm / 270 x 195mm)£16 50, ¼ page(130 x 195mm / 65 x 390mm)£9 25, Eighth page(65 x 195mm / 130 x 95mm)£5 75, Sixteenth page(65 x 95mm)£3. (Commercial): 1 page; £38, ½ page; £20 50, ¼ page; £12, Eighth page; £7 50, Sixteenth page; £4.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Tim Munro, Andrew Zsabo.

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MOVIE UPDATE

AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS the movie Doctor has yet to be officially confirmed, but an announcement is expected very soon so it is advisable to keep an eye on the press.

A new highly-tipped contender is noneother than John (Basil Fawlty) Cleese - a popular choice with US fans who sent Coast to Coast their nominations for the role. Cleese made a cameo appearance back in 1979 in the classic Paris-set adventure CITY OF DEATH, and recently revealed he desperately wants to break away from comedy altogether. Popular US actor 'cuddly' Dudley Moore is also high on the list of contenders in addition to Tom Baker, but it is fairly certain that the part will go to a British actor.

However, the identity of the female companion can be confirmed as Caroline Munro - the '70s sex symbol famous for her busty roles in movies and TV adverts - although it is believed her image in the film will be toned down to a Romana-type character, but her casting has still met with some dissension with some US fans who claim her casting does not inspire confidence for the quality of the production (significantly it appears the same producers and script writer were also responsible for - as one fan put it - her previous "slice and dice exploitation film").

In addition to Caroline Munro, there will also be a male companion (to be announced) as well as a "surprise"...

Producers Peter Litten and George Dugdale - famous for creating the prosphetic make-up effects and the visual image for the Max Headroom show and who have also done some SFX work for DOCTOR WHO and Blakes 7 - will also be directing the movie. The screenplay is complete and is written by a little-known writer called Mark Ezra, and all that is known of the script is that the Doctor will be in the mould of the TV version (not the Amicus films) and will still be a Time Lord from Gallifrey.

Litten and Dugdale have been in Los Angeles recently negotiating for US distribution with major American studios. The film is fully financed privately with a working budget of $14 million. With SFX already well under way, this month sees the start of actual preproduction commencing in London with principle photography scheduled to begin in Ireland in April. There will be additional locations in the Canary Islands, including Lanzarote.

On the marketing side, Coast to Coast are looking for a promotional tie-in - to span the preproduction-to-release time frame - with soft drink and fast food companies, with the target audience aimed at males and females between 12 - 24.

Horror scene has toddlers in tears

ANGRY mums lashed the BBC yesterday after Doctor Who left their toddlers sobbing in terror.

For the controversial present series ended with a horror scene of the villain melting to death.

Furious mothers rang up to protest —and even the show's fan club were outraged.

Gary Levy, who edits The Doctor Who Bulletin, said: "It was gratuitous to show what they did—it was just there to shock.

"It's a great shame because Doctor Who never used to be this bad."

The disturbing scene came when the villain—Kane the ice man—was caught in sunlight and his face melted away.

But the show's producer, John Nathan-Turner, said: "It was just like a snowman melting."

Slumped

He admitted it was "a little scary," but added: "I don't believe it was horrific.

"It was heavily established in previous episodes that he was a man of ice and he simply melted.

"We didn't intend to upset anyone."

However, the complaints are bound to prompt BBC bosses to review Doctor Who's future.

The show has slumped to 90th place in the top 100 shows, with an audience of only 5.3 million.

Fans have already called for a return to the old days of the Daleks—and want Nathan-Turner replaced.

Yesterday, Gary Levy renewed that call.

"A lot of fans have already given up on the show. This new controversy will prove more damaging."

The Star newspaper (not renowned for their accuracy) recently reported about the storm of protest that greeted the transmission of the "gruesome" face-melting sequence in Season 24's final episode. The story, headed 'DOCTOR BOO WHO!', includes vague quotes from D.W.B.'s editor who agreed that, within the context of such a whimsical and pantomimesque season, the sudden inclusion of such a gory effect was out of place and so appeared gratuitous, as if designed to shock. (The quotes are all misquotes !).

BELOW: Recent correspondence to The Standard...

DOCTOR WHO. Dragonfire.* New three-part adventure for the Timelord who, in his current Sylvester McCoy incarnation, does not seem to be greatly impressing Dr Who afficianados (there are, of course, those who believe that the Doctor has not been quite the same since he lost that cavegirl in the chamois-leather romper skins).

Dr Who unfairly struck off

CONTRARY to the somewhat dogmatic views of your TV previewer Geoffrey Phillips, I and many others am highly impressed by Sylvester McCoy's portrayal of the doctor.

As a former co-ordinator of the Dr Who Appreciation Society, I would be described by Mr Phillips as an aficionado and must add that the quality of the actor isn't in question—it's the script and production values.—Tony Jordan, Oldfield Lane, Greenford, Middx.

Sylvester McCoy

JN-T QUOTES

On the weekend of November 27-29 - well into the OPERATION WHO campaign - JN-T revealed on a local US PBS station that he has "another project" that he will work on after the silver jubilee celebrations. At a convention in June 1987 the same man said "I think the success of the show, really, is the constant change...in format...that actually makes the show constantly appealing".

Nathan-Turner is also curiously interviewed in the January Starburst where he attributes his reason for staying - despite his intention to move on in September 1986 - as being the prospect of working with a new team and "...the enormous attraction of the approaching 25th anniversary season; plus persuasion from my peers".

RATINGS

DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN achieved a stable audience in contrast with its predecessors, with episode 3 gaining the highest rating of the season so far:

EPISODE ONE (90) 5.3m
EPISODE TWO (93) 5.1m
EPISODE THREE (87) 5.4m

HUGH DAVID

'60s director Hugh David died recently. He was responsible for the two Troughton tales; THE HIGHLANDERS and FURY FROM THE DEEP, the latter of which lives on in the memories of many for its extraordinarily eerie and dramatic production.

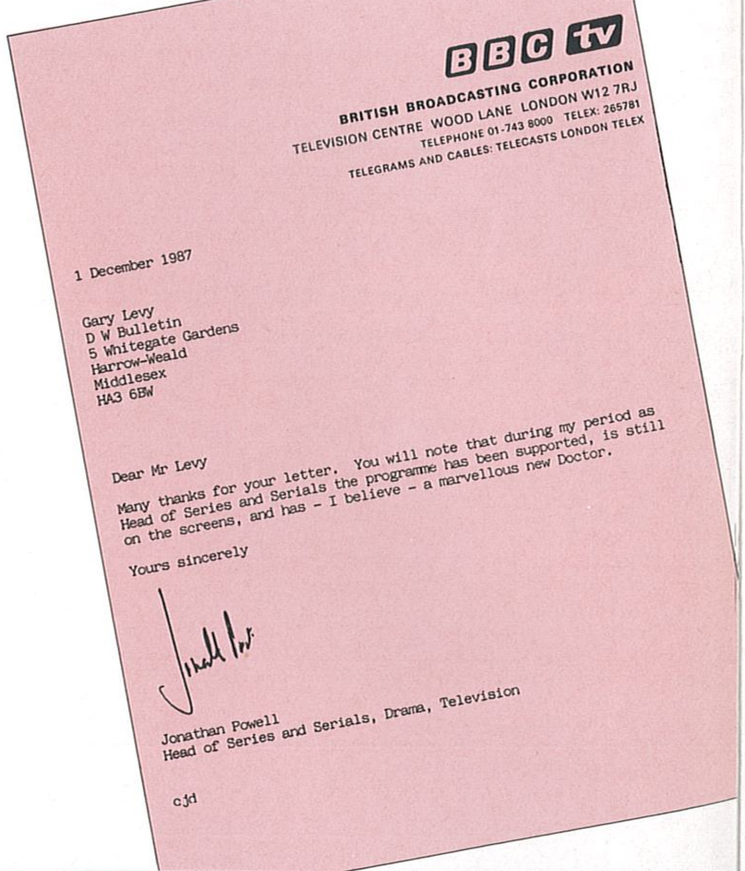
POWELL IN BBC FLARE-UP

New BBC1 Controller, Jonathan Powell, has been involved in one of the major traumas recently engulfing the BBC. It is alleged he had a blazing row with deputy news director Ron Neil after Neil said he wanted the news to overrun on the day of the historic Washington peace treaty in order to carry the signing live. However Powell wanted the new comedy programme, Divided We Stand, to be screened as planned, and furiuous at not being consulted about the news overrunning burst into Mr Neil's office where a furious row erupted and where, it has been reported, he ordered Neil to "Come outside" and proceeded to shake him in full view of BBC staff !

The new Head of Drama has yet to be announced but a BBC source indicates it is likely to be Colin Thomas, Powell's assistant and protégé when he was in the job. A letter from Powell in response to our campaign is reprinted below.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Mark Strickson is to emigrate to Australia in July...Australian TV network ABC have bought the rights to screen Season 24...The dates for the Time-Festival '88 convention in America this year (see ad last issue) are July 1-3...Peter Davison is interviewed in depth in the latest US Starlog magazine...The Telly Addicts final included a DOCTOR WHO question round with each team quizzed about the Daleks and the Ice Warriors...The Masterteam final also included a question about actors who've played the Dr.



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1 December 1987

Gary Levy
D W Bulletin
5 Whitegate Gardens
Harrow-Weald
Middlesex
HA3 6BW

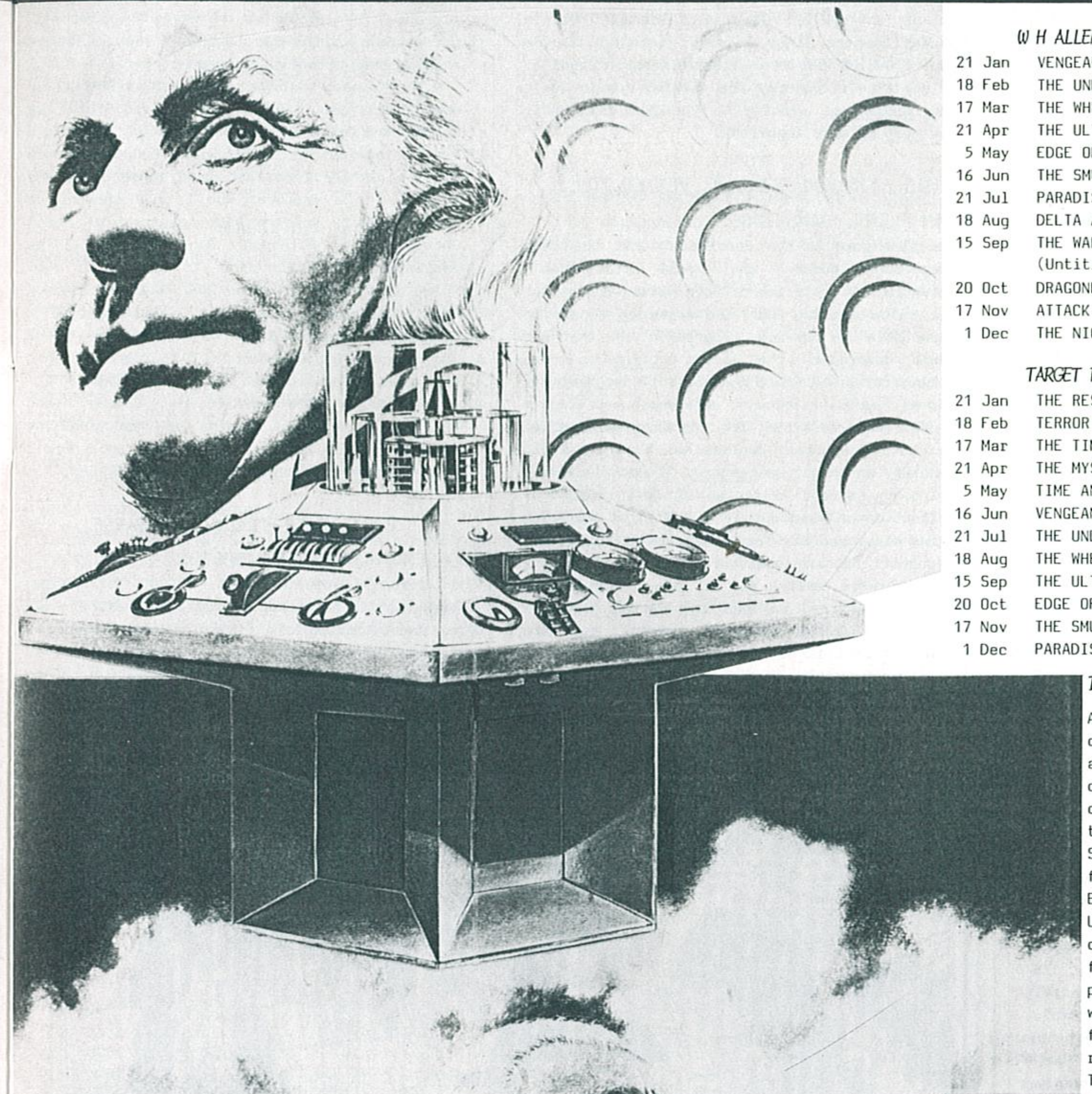
Dear Mr Levy

Many thanks for your letter. You will note that during my period as Head of Series and Serials the programme has been supported, is still on the screens, and has - I believe - a marvellous new Doctor.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Powell
Head of Series and Serials, Drama, Television

cjd



W H ALLEN HARDBACK: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1988

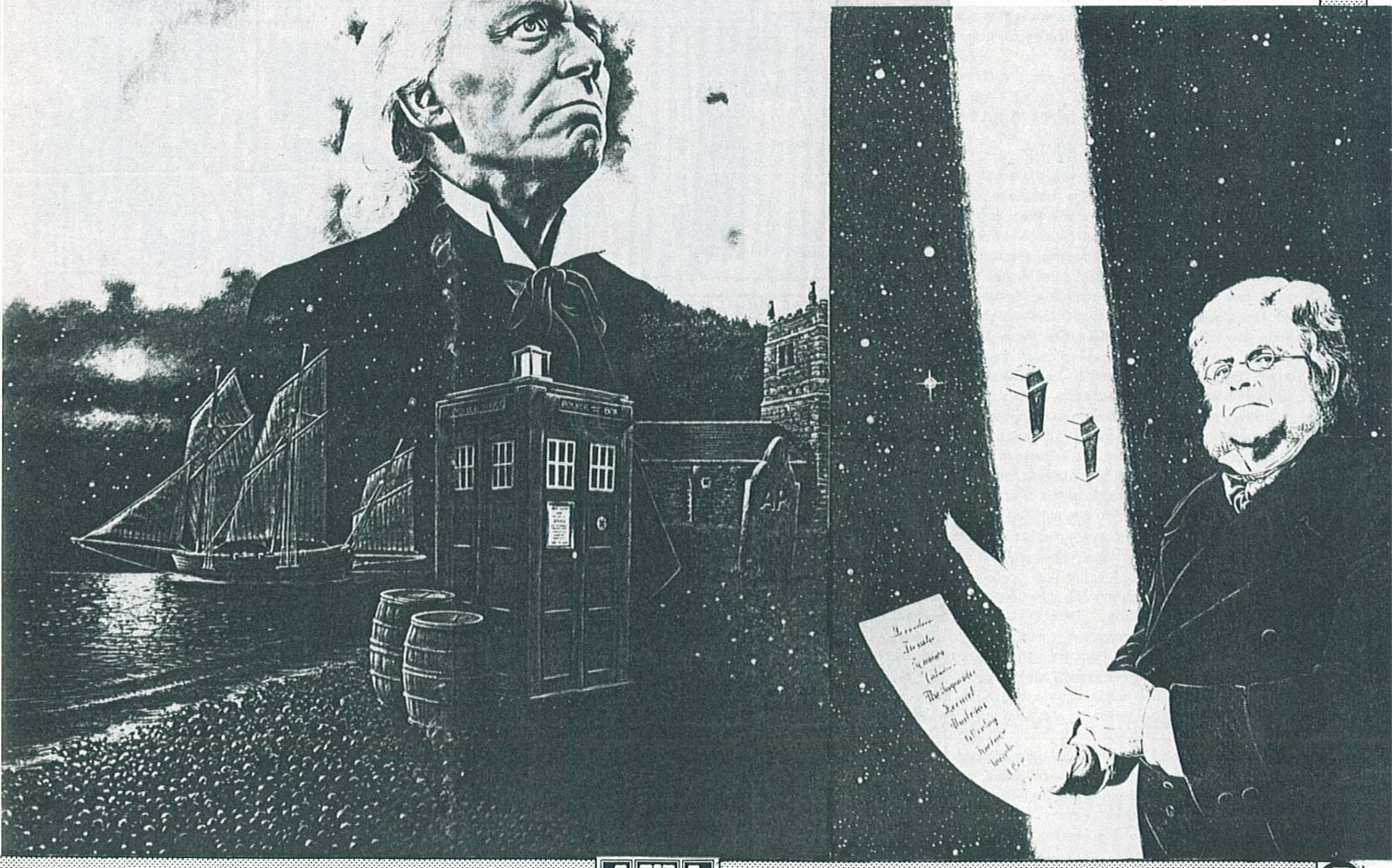
21 Jan	VENGEANCE ON VAROS	Philip Martin	£7 95
18 Feb	THE UNDERWATER MENACE	Nigel Robinson	£7 95
17 Mar	THE WHEEL IN SPACE	Terrance Dicks	£7 95
21 Apr	THE ULTIMATE FOE	Pip & Jane Baker	£7 95
5 May	EDGE OF DESTRUCTION	Nigel Robinson	£7 95
16 Jun	THE SMUGGLERS	Terrance Dicks	£7 95
21 Jul	PARADISE TOWERS	Stephen Wyatt	£7 95
18 Aug	DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN	Malcolm Kholl	£7 95
15 Sep	THE WAR MACHINES	Ian Stuart Black	£7 95
	(Untitled)	Peter Haining	(?)
20 Oct	DRAGONFIRE	Ian Briggs	£7 95
17 Nov	ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN	Eric Saward	£7 95
1 Dec	THE NIGHTMARE FAIR	Graham Williams	£7 95

TARGET PAPERBACK: JANUARY - DECEMBER 1988

21 Jan	THE RESCUE	Ian Marter	£1 99
18 Feb	TERROR OF THE VERVOIDS	Pip & Jane Baker	£1 99
17 Mar	THE TIME MEDDLER	Nigel Robinson	£1 99
21 Apr	THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET	Terrance Dicks	£1 99
5 May	TIME AND THE RANI	Pip & Jane Baker	£1 99
16 Jun	VENGEANCE ON VAROS	Philip Martin	£1 99
21 Jul	THE UNDERWATER MENACE	Nigel Robinson	£1 99
18 Aug	THE WHEEL IN SPACE	Terrance Dicks	£1 99
15 Sep	THE ULTIMATE FOE	Pip & Jane Baker	£1 99
20 Oct	EDGE OF DESTRUCTION	Nigel Robinson	£1 99
17 Nov	THE SMUGGLERS	Terrance Dicks	£1 99
1 Dec	PARADISE TOWERS	Stephen Wyatt	£1 99

IN PRE'ARATION MINDWARP by Philip Martin

ALISTER PEARSON has kindly supplied us with copies of his artwork which will be adorning various book covers in 1988 to compensate for the delay in printed covers coming through. There are two Hartnell tales (THE EDGE OF DESTRUCTION and THE SMUGGLERS - the latter of which awaits final approval from art director Mike Brett) and the revised version for THE ULTIMATE FOE. Alister has also been commissioned for PARADISE TOWERS allaying fears that the covers would switch back to photos after Sylvester McCoy indicated he wasn't keen on being represented in painted form, but apparently W H Allen have already received complaints following the release of TIME AND THE RANI's photographic jacket.



THE PRO-JN-T FACTION SPEAK

MARIA JAMES, Uxbridge, MIDDX

I have just read your 50th issue. I am very disappointed. What makes you think that you represent "all the show's fans"? You state your 99:1 statistic in your editorial; has it occured to you that those fans who are fed up with your petty obsessions will no longer read D.W.B.? As such, your statistical sample is not representative.

The main purpose of Operation WHO seems to be to get rid of John Nathan-Turner. Who do you think you are ? Apart from anything else, you are trying to take this man's livelihood from him.

As for not receiving replies to your letters from Michael Grade and Jonathan Powell, apart from the fact that they are busy men with a television company to run, and cannot be expected to drop everything and answer your obsessive letters, how would you feel if you had years of experience behind you, and some jumped-up little twerp keeps pestering you with letters telling you how to do your job ?

The newspaper articles are serving no constructive purpose. If someone knowledgeable about the programme, like a fan, is willing to slag it off as effectively as you are, the hacks will lap it up. Controversy makes very good copy. I think you overestimate your own importance, and you have overstepped the mark this time.

EDITOR: D.W.B.'s sales figures have always remained consistent and as such there is no evidence to suggest we have lost our pro-JNT readership. For example, why are you still obviously reading D.W.B.? It was a relief to receive your letter since it is always healthy to state the views from both sides to any argument, but unfortunately I feel - since yours is the only pro-JNT letter we have received since Operation WHO begun - that you have done pro-JNT fans a disservice with your unnecessarily rude tone and ill-considered facts. For example, John Nathan-Turner to his credit runs his own successful production company and so DOCTOR WHO isn't his sole source of income, and Jonathan Powell has since replied to our letter (see this issue) whereas Michael Grade, for obvious reasons, has not and will not.

LACK OF FIRM INTENTION

PAUL DUMONT, Fareham, HANTS

The Did You See...? report was disappointing. We saw that Ian Levine was the ultimate DOCTOR WHO fan, but we heard few of the arguments of D.W.B.#49. The declining ratings were focussed upon but the BBC's scheduling strategy and the miscasting of Colin Baker and Bonnie Langford were not mentioned as probable reasons for the decline. Jeremy Bentham pointed out that DOCTOR WHO has a uniquely flexible format, but did anyone say that originality and freshness are also imporant, and can't be expected from a producer after seven years ?

There was no serious examination of the programme at the height of its popularity compared with the show now. Then we had experienced directors, powerful storylines, and actors chosen for their suitability to the part. Now we have directors used to the style and flair of Crossroads, storylines as potentially horrifying as a tea bag, and actors chosen because they are 'names' in showbiz.

But the main problem with the report was its lack of firm intention. Some of the time we had analysis of the programme's concept, then there would be a tour of the Doctors, then there'd be a few comments. It never came together, and the 2-minute still of The Eagle didn't begin to link up with what had gone before, and what was to come after.

Undoubtably JN-T's absence made things difficult. This shouldn't have prevented a serious analysis of why things are wrong instead of just telling us that they were: and the ratings clearly show things are wrong, whether you are pro or anti-JNT. In his Telegraph article Charles Spencer finds himself "warming to the idea of DOCTOR WHO as a slightly camp intersellar variety show". Clearly the viewing public don't find themselves warming to the idea and their view must be more important.

WAS 'DID YOU SEE...?' VETTED TOO ?

SEAN FLINN, CAMBRIDGE

I've also come to the conclusion that the Beeb (they don't deserve their full title) don't listen to ANY criticism of John Nathan-Turner but will allow leading WHO luminaries to appear on respectable TV review programmes if the end result discredits the series itself. I was looking forward to Did You See...? on November 22nd as I actually thought some serious criticism of JN-T would be aired, but the impression given was that the series' decline has been a natural disaster, which got us nowhere. I don't remember seeing any direct criticism of JN-T (though by implication he came out in a bad light when Ian Levine disproved the "memory cheats" excuse), and I suspect that any unfavourable comments of the producer were cut. As it was, that feature merely reiterated the facts but ignored the main reason. Jeremy Bentham's comment that the series' format is such that almost anything can be produced within it almost hit the nail on the head (namely, if so, WHY allow a producer to steer it purely in an inferior panto-style direction when storywise the sky's the limit ?), but nobody pointed out that JN-T has failed to realise that potential in recent years.

With the news that Nathan-Turner will still be there this year, for the first time EVER I am not looking forward to a new season. That's a sad confession for a life-long fan to have to make, as is the fact that I no longer have any respect for a producer who I once thought to have integrity and the best interests of 'his' show at heart. Although I don't think he's ever displayed much willingness to listen to even faint criticism (see the 1980 Starburst interview), in recent years he's added to this a blundering insensitivity to the series' needs and general bad judgement, and deliberate or not this does not reflect at all well on him.

In holding this opinion, of course, (and unlike the BBC, not seeing how wonderful he really is), I am completely mad, as are all those who dare to suggest that he isn't God !

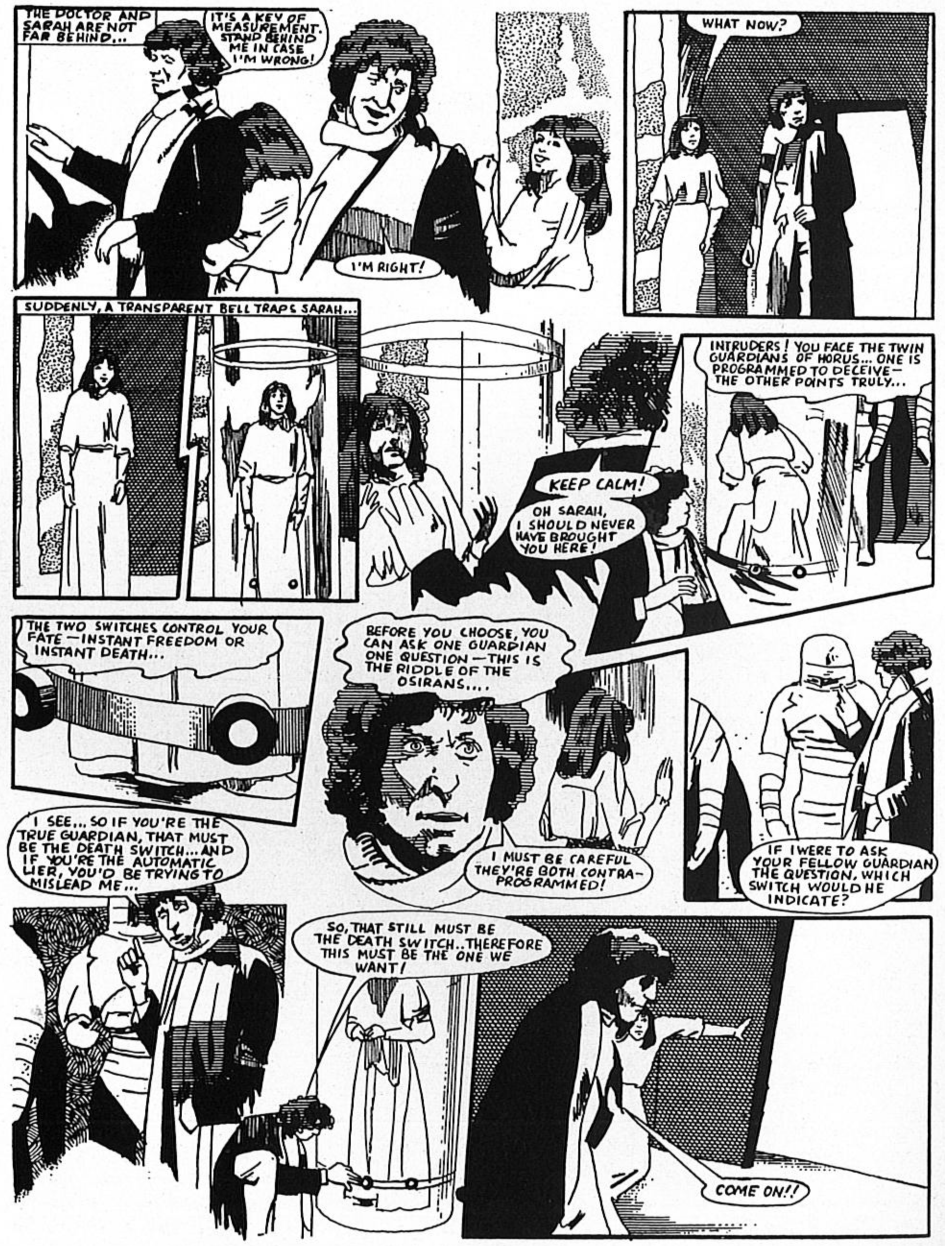
BBC's PATRONISING ARROGANCE

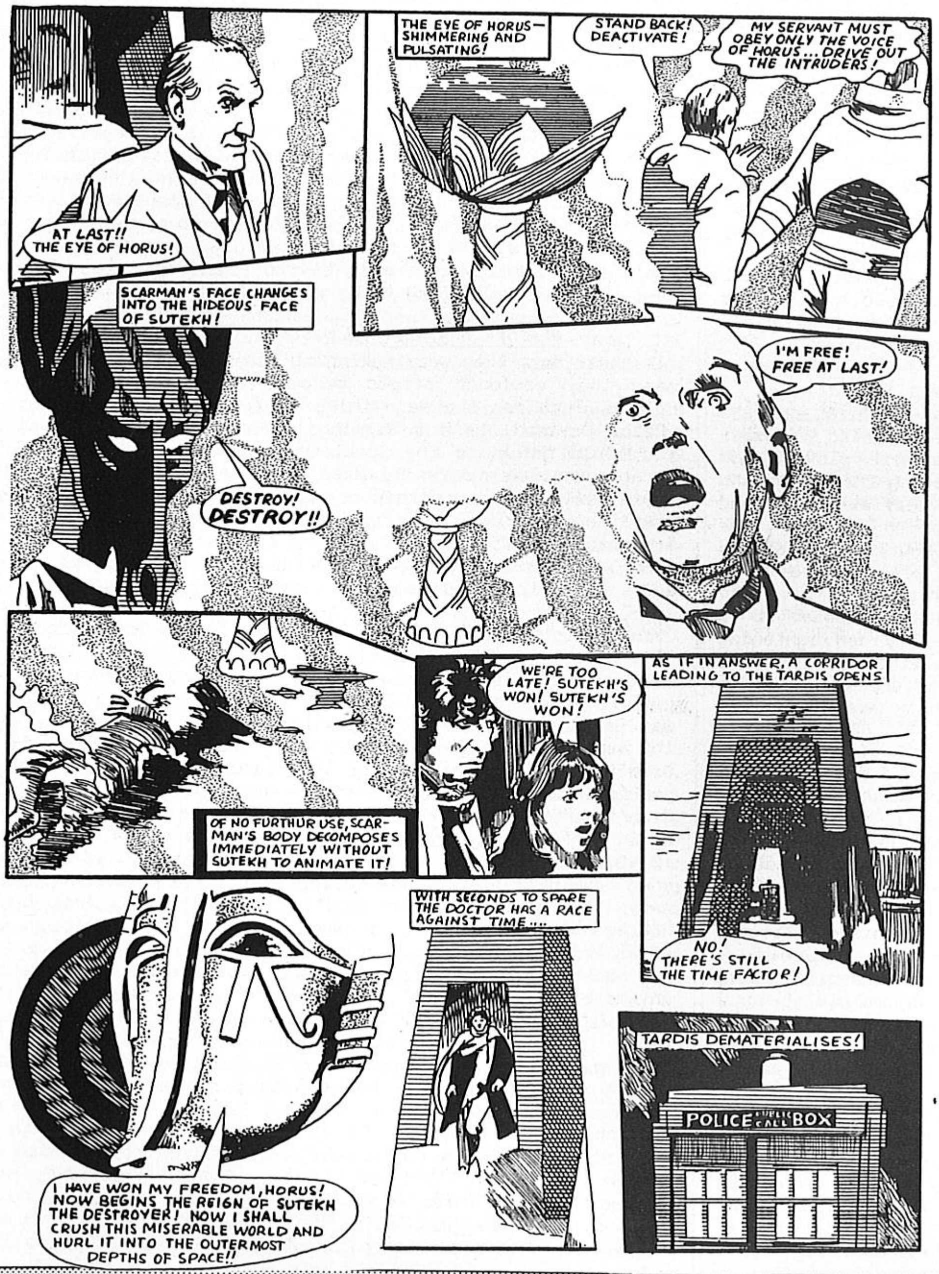
JEREMY ALDERSON, CAMBRIDGE

I strongly dislike the BBC's patronising arrogance in believing its audience neither have an understanding of television, nor deserve a say in the programme they receive. Since when have they taken notice of anybody, let alone DOCTOR WHO fans ? I therefore suspect that nothing D.W.B. does will remove JN-T. On the contrary, when under attack the BBC resist even more firmly. To sack him would acknowledge their mistakes. Who knows, if everyone had praised JN-T he may already have left !

I suspect that JN-T's future rests in the hands of the new Head of Drama (Jonathan Powell's replacement, now that he's Controller of BBC1) rather than anything the public can do .

THE PYRAMIDS OF MARS: Part 8 (The concluding chapter) by Andrew Szabo


THE DOCTOR AND SARAH ARE NOT FAR BEHIND...
IT'S A KEY OF MEASUREMENT. STAND BEHIND ME IN CASE I'M WRONG!
I'M RIGHT!
WHAT NOW?
SUDDENLY, A TRANSPARENT BELL TRAPS SARAH...
KEEP CALM!
OH SARAH, I SHOULD NEVER HAVE BROUGHT YOU HERE!
INTRUDERS! YOU FACE THE TWIN GUARDIANS OF HORUS... ONE IS PROGRAMMED TO DECEIVE— THE OTHER POINTS TRULY...
THE TWO SWITCHES CONTROL YOUR FATE —INSTANT FREEDOM OR INSTANT DEATH...
BEFORE YOU CHOOSE, YOU CAN ASK ONE GUARDIAN ONE QUESTION —THIS IS THE RIDDLE OF THE OSIRANS....
I MUST BE CAREFUL THEY'RE BOTH CONTRA-PROGRAMMED!
IF I WERE TO ASK YOUR FELLOW GUARDIAN THE QUESTION, WHICH SWITCH WOULD HE INDICATE?
I SEE... SO IF YOU'RE THE TRUE GUARDIAN, THAT MUST BE THE DEATH SWITCH... AND IF YOU'RE THE AUTOMATIC LIER, YOU'D BE TRYING TO MISLEAD ME...
SO, THAT STILL MUST BE THE DEATH SWITCH.. THEREFORE THIS MUST BE THE ONE WE WANT!
COME ON!!


AT LAST!! THE EYE OF HORUS!
THE EYE OF HORUS— SHIMMERING AND PULSATING!
STAND BACK! DEACTIVATE!
MY SERVANT MUST OBEY ONLY THE VOICE OF HORUS... DRIVE OUT THE INTRUDERS!
SCARMAN'S FACE CHANGES INTO THE HIDEOUS FACE OF SUTEKH!
I'M FREE! FREE AT LAST!
DESTROY! DESTROY!!
OF NO FURTHUR USE, SCARMAN'S BODY DECOMPOSES IMMEDIATELY WITHOUT SUTEKH TO ANIMATE IT!
WE'RE TOO LATE! SUTEKH'S WON! SUTEKH'S WON!
AS IF IN ANSWER, A CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE TARDIS OPENS
NO! THERE'S STILL THE TIME FACTOR!
WITH SECONDS TO SPARE THE DOCTOR HAS A RACE AGAINST TIME....
I HAVE WON MY FREEDOM, HORUS! NOW BEGINS THE REIGN OF SUTEKH THE DESTROYER! NOW I SHALL CRUSH THIS MISERABLE WORLD AND HURL IT INTO THE OUTERMOST DEPTHS OF SPACE!!
TARDIS DEMATERIALISES!
POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX

BLACKLIST

RICHARD THOMAS, Macclesfield, CHESHIRE

I can't say I agree 100% with Ian Levine, but most of what he has said seems to be the general view of most fans at the moment, but I doubt what he or any other fan says will have any effect whatsoever on the BBC as I am sure they have a blacklist of fans whose letters and comments are totally ignored.

AGONISINGLY SIMPLE SOLUTION

RAVI JAIN, New Jersey, U.S.A.

I wholeheartedly agree with Ian Levine's views so soundly stated in D.W.B.#49. I only wish the BBC would take note of this view held by almost all in Fandom and all in the professional realm. With each atrocity JN-T is responsible for, one agonises over how simple it would be to get someone who knows what they're doing and show a true apreciation for the show (such as Michael E. Briant).

The ratings have plummeted and the show has been criticised by the fans as well as past experienced creative forces of the show (includind past Doctors and producers). Your 4-word headline summed it all up.

CUT !

TIM MUNRO, Huddersfield, WEST YORKS

I was disappointed by Did You See...?'s little piece. I don't think it pointed the finger of blame quite as well as it could've done. The press are quite shamefully pushing the idea that it's McCoy we don't like, and the show didn't really put the truth forward strongly enough. That said, it certainly proved the point that the show has suffered violent decline (the clips were superbly chosen to demonstrate this), and Ian Levine and Jeremy Bentham came over well; far removed from the usual media image of loonies in long scarves ! I see JN-T told the Mirror that he refused to appe because there was "nothing to defend". Heavens, the poor man must actually belive all that rubbish the BBC were feeding the gullible morons of Fleet Street about being "delighted" with the new season. Thankfully his non-appearance was for the best - a number of nonfans I know, who happened to watch, later remarked to me how silly and arrogant DOCTOR WHO's producer seemed ! Maybe we are getting our message across - what a shame it's probably far too late.

Like I say, I'd have preferred a more damning, accusative piece, but I've no doubt that Ian and Jeremy did try to point the finger at the great Hawaiian-shirted one and it got cut ! However, I'm glad to see Fandom fighting back at last.

Wow !! What a marvellous 50th issue - congratulations ! The finest fanzine I've ever seen. I particularly liked Operation Werewolf; things like this are fascinating to me. I don't suppose you could ever obtain Camfield's Foreign Legion story ? I'm a great fan of his Beau Geste and I'd love to see what the DOCTOR WHO version was like. I can't say I liked the Sylvester McCoy interview, infact I found it deeply disturbing: it's sad that Sylvester seems happy to judge the characters of his critics when he hasn't even read what they've written or said. If journalists and fans judged him in a similar manner, McCoy would be the first to complain. Sadly, like JN-T, he seems to take any criticism of the show as a personal insult. On many points he seems so painfully ignorant that I can't help feeling he's been protected from - and kept in ignorance of - the controversy surrounding the show (I thought this when watching Open Air), and his "the critics can go and watch Coronation Street" line is grossly insulting. I don't see why I should ! I've been a DOCTOR WHO viewer for 15 years - is it too much to ask that the show rewards this loyalty with a bit of quality drama occasionally ? Anyway, I loathe the Street and DOCTOR WHO ought to be providing a decent alternative.

As for his "ordinary viewers like it very much", I just laughed. Who on Earth has been telling poor Sylvester that the show is still watched by ordinary viewers ?! I liked Andrew Beech's right to reply. Very concise, polite, reasonable and well-argued; just what we need, especially in the face of the BBC's arrogant disregard for Fandom and Nathan-Turner's childish petulance.

McCOY'S TIRESOME MANNERISMS

RICHARD FITZGERALD, GLASGOW G2

I'm afraid I must declare myself as one of those described by Mr S.Lancaster (D.W.B.#49) as "naively uninformed" about Mr McCoy's acting experience as I am unaware of any major film or television roles he has undertaken. In fact, after watching the latest episodes of DOCTOR WHO I must say I am still in the dark as to his major TV appearances too (I believe McCoy is the one in the funny hat who keeps falling over, but it's difficult to tell as he's in the background most of the time). Yes, I warmed to his performance in PARADISE TOWERS - what else was there to enjoy about it - but I am already growing tired with his mannerisms and style. As for his monotone guttural sneering voice (standing up to villains for the use of), it hardly compares with Tom Baker's rich tones and lacks any of the warmth and charm possessed by Pertwee or Troughton. The sad thing is we may never know (as with Davison and C Baker) what he'd be like with a different producer, speaking of which, I eagerly read the latest interview with Nathan-Turner in D.W.M., expecting some incisive questioning from Mr Gary Russell. Imagine my surprise to find that instead, I was presented with the most sychophantic load of toadying I've come across in a long time. It was when I read Mr Russell's question asking did JN-T ever think in 1979 he'd still be in the job today, that I felt like vomiting (it was an urge I resisted due to the fact I was in the middle of W H Smith's at the time - you don't think I'd actually buy a copy of D.W.M., do you ?!). I think some questions should be asked of Mr Russell himself to elicit some explanation for letting JN-T off the hook, or was it another proofing error ?

SEASON 24 DID MAKE THE GRADE

DAVID RYAN, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM

I notice a lot of people write to you wondering why JN-T is now trying to out-Williams Williams

CONT'D PAGE 12...

INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

DOUGLAS CAMFIELD (D.W.B.#8 & 9, March and April 1984)

"I can remember that there was something in the first episode that bothered me. The gates to the junkyard, where the TARDIS has landed, opened of their own accord ! They had attached string to both gates and as the camera tracked forward, they opened ! It seemed unmotivated, and it still does. I reckon Waris(Hussein) blew that bit. . .I originally wanted Julian Glover to play the lead(THE CRUSADE), but at the time he was unavailable. I then thought of Nicholas Courtney who, at that point, I knew only by name because we had been at school in Egypt at the same time. I was just going to cast him when Julian Glover suddenly became available again. So it all worked out okay - I kept Nick Cortney in mind and cast him as Bret Vyon some time later. But I was delighted with Julian Glover. He was, in my view, the first 'quality' actor ever to appear as a guest in DOCTOR WHO. He made it respectable to appear in the show, and many others have followed him since. . . He(Hartnell) knew he had the camera on him in that final scene and so he just took advantage and wished the audience a Merry Christmas. There was nothing I could do about it. That particular episode was a bit of fun. The whole idea of it being serious DOCTOR WHO is a bit wild. It was intended as one big farce. The beginning of that episode had a Z CARS sequence and I wanted to have the Z CARS actors playing the policemen but they refused to do it. It was a good idea anyway. . .To be perfectly honest, Bill could be difficult to work with. He was cantankerous, wilful, dogmatic and never suffered fools gladly - but life was never dull in his company and he was generous and encouraging if he knew that, like him, you put the good of the programme above all. He had 'star quality' in abundance and brought a special magic to the part. He 'created' the Doctor and provided the yardstick against which every actor who plays the part is measured. He helped me to get started as a director and I owe him a great deal. He was a remarkable man and I shall never forget him."

ROY SKELTON (D.W.B.#12/13, 1984 Summer Special)

"THE ARK I believe I remember because it was my first one and my first meeting with William Hartnell. I also remember having great sympathy for the actors who were playing the Monoids, with their 'Beatle' haircuts covering their eyes and their bodies completely encased in rubber (very sweaty !) and a ping-pong ball stuck in their mouths for an eye!. . .This (PLANET OF THE DALEKS) was another of my favourites. I adored working with Katy Manning, and to almost play a love scene with her, and be invisible, was slightly hysterical!. . .The Dalek is so beautifully simple in form that I suppose it is the fascination of seeing what seems a very unfrightening thing suddenly become a ruthless, all-powerful being. It's rather like - to use a parable - the boring cheese grater in the kitchen suddenly controlling everything - even your life expectancy!"

JOHN NATHAN-TURNER (D.W.B.#14 & 15, September & October 1984)

"I think there possibly is a danger of becoming stale, that's true. With regards to finishing the show I think that is absolute nonsense, I mean the show is so successful now, it's more successful than it's ever been. It produces a lot of revenue for the Corporation in terms of exhibitions, merchandising, novelisations, many other books, not to mention the foreign sales. It has a healthy audience in this country and I don't think there are any plans whatsoever to finish it. . .I thought it(THE TWIN DILEMMA)was an excellent vehicle for a new Doctor, an excellent vehicle, which is why we did it. . .I think if one used only writers who are guaranteed to make good TV this industry would stagnate. . .Eric Saward wouldn't be my script editor if we hadn't, during Chris Bidmead's reign, looked for new writers. . .I abhor American 'glossy' sci-fi series and there is NO attempt whatsoever to make (DOCTOR WHO) a kind of 'lip-gloss Dallas in Space'! You upset me to say that. It's no attempt at all - there's no substitute for good production values. . .Can you honestly say you liked the costume of Omega in THE THREE DOCTORS ? Well, you did, I didn't, it's as simple as that - to me the Sea Devils in string vests doesn't make nowadays a good visual design. . .I think one positive side of America is that Michael Grade has been in Los Angeles for the last couple of years where DOCTOR WHO transmits so I'm sure he's aware of it and the popularity, and I think people are worrying unnecessarily about the future of the show - there will definitely be a DOCTOR WHO season next year, that's already guaranteed. . .I think that part of being an adult in this world is to have some kind of critical faculty. . .I have had a few letters lately saying they are delighted the anti-JN-T campaign is coming to an end. . .No show that keeps getting publicity like (DOCTOR WHO) can ever get the chop. . .I have always had the general viewing public's interests at heart, and I include within that the fans. . .There is an attempt to win audiences and to keep the show being popular."

COLIN BAKER [D.W.B.#17/18, 1984 Winter Special]

"Not being one to allow any part to be small I attempted to make(Maxil)larger, not by extending the dialogue but by presenting a character that is larger than life which meant that I attracted the attention of the producer who told me to stop being quite so loud. I subsequently met John Nathan-Turner at the wedding of a mutual friend who had been an assistant floor manager and we got on quite well - it was one of those jolly days. He says he spotted something in me on that day which he thought would be ideal for the next Doctor - a sort of showing-off basically. . .They're all brilliant this season and now this one(TIMELASH). I think it is going to be a season where you're going to have difficulty in choosing your favourite. . .The way I feel at the moment I'm enjoying it so much I can't foresee myself wishing to leave it abruptly. I had this little temptation to wish to beat the previous record of 7 years. I certainly might be around for the 25th - I think that will be fun - and who knows, if they make a film I would like to be around for that as well."

HEATHER HARTNELL [D.W.B.#19, January 1985]

"In those days they were making it in black and white and they said they couldn't afford to make a childrens' series in colour. That was the main thing that frustrated them all. . .Peter Davison, he's a darling, he's the nicest person, but you could go up to the local cricket club and meet two or three young men who really look just like Peter Davison ! But where could you go in this country, let alone the world, and meet people like Jon Pertwee, or Tom Baker, or Patrick Troughton, or William Hartnell ?. . .I was absblutely satisfied with(Richard Hurndall's)performance. William had a wig and I think it was probably the same one that Richard used."

GRAHAM WILLIAMS D.W.B.#23 & 24-25,June & 1985 Summer Special]

"The outcry over(THE DEADLY ASSASSIN)was just a culmination of a long time, as you know, of complaints about the programme getting more and more violent and more and more sadistic. It was part and parcel of my taking over the show that amongst the other things I would do, I would ensure that the violence didn't reach those sort of protest levels, which I didn't mind particularly as I thought the violence had gone too far. It didn't offend me greatly but I didn't think that the show would suffer by taking the violence down a notch or two, but it wasn't a priority by any means. My priority, if there was one, from Bill Slater, was to take the programme even further away from "kiddie kiddie land". . .The previous year Philip had been able to put two fingers in the air to inflation, but after that year, each of the years I had the programme we were cut back by something like 8 to 10% a year when inflation was anywhere running at 25%, so you're faced at the end of the year with making the programme for something like 30% less, which is nutty ! One of the very principle reasons that I left, although I was offered to stay another year, was that I hadn't anymore ideas as to how the programme could be made ingeniously on this budget. . .Bob Holmes, having with his deft hand done these wonderful stories with all sorts of horrific nasties, having been denied that decided that he couldn't stand it any longer having already stayed on a year longer than he'd intended to. . .I know that folk go on and on and on about the humour in the programme, but I didn't have characters wandering around, as I saw in the recent series, looking at people as menus. . .I spent most of my time stopping Tom putting in humorous business. That seemed to be my function in life at that time was to stop Tom. At one point he suggested that the companion should be a cabbage or a parrot to sit on his shoulder. . .It was adult humour that children could perhaps comprehend - if they didn't understand it, it didn't frustrate or annoy them, and it certainly didn't get in the way of the story. I think the people who were most frustrated and annoyed about it were the people who were neither children nor adults, and a lot of the critics (fans) were, I think, in the mid-to-late teens, where it is very tricky to find any humour that succeeds with that age group. . .I got several letters from Mary Whitehouse. The last one I got into very hot water with the BBC because I insisted on replying to it personally and the BBC said that was a very bad idea. I gave as good as I got - she wrote an extremely pompous and rude letter, and I wrote back equally pompous and equally rude!. . .In the first season it seemed common sense, as I was a new boy, to use a good strong mix of people who'd done it before. I didn't think there was much virtue in all of us leading the blind. . .Nobody has yet figured out that if you want to save yourself from a Dalek, to start with you hop on a 42 bus - because a Dalek can't go very fast and they can't climb up on the platform!. . .I had a lot of pressure to bring back the Master. . .I came in for a fair amount of stick whilst I was there, but it was amusing for the first two or three years when I left - I kept on meeting fans for interviews and it would always open with: 'I think you've been done a lot of disservice and I want to put the record right.' What had they been saying about me ? I had no idea what the criticisms were ! As I say, if I'd taken too much notice of them I would have shot myself! Well, everyone likes to be liked!. . .I read in an issue of D.W.B. where somebody said that the(17th)Season would have been much more successful had(SHADA)finished it and I couldn't agree more. Yes, THE HORNS OF NIMON was a very weak script, a very weak programme, and that's why we buried it number five. I don't know why on earth John didn't finish off SHADA - with Tom there and Lalla there I would have thought it would be a very cheap show for him with all the footage on board. . .I know(THE ANDROIDS OF TARA)got a tremendous amount of stick from the fans but the ratings were jolly good! I was used to around 8½-9 million. . .I had to put my foot down because all the crews, all the design crew and the camera crew had all gone to make Blakes 7. I remember wandering through the Blakes 7 studio and thinking 'Well, hello, we used that last week'!. . .You must never investigate the Doctor's sex life - if he's got two hearts, what else has he got two of ?!. . .Terry Nation wouldn't have(K9 in DESTINY OF THE DALEKS)because he was too much competition for the Daleks. . .I was phoned up out of a clear blue sky by one Eric Saward asking me if I'd like to write a script and saying that, because of continued pleadings from the fans, would I try and devise a story to feature the Toymaker, and 'Furthermore, John would like, if it's possible, to feature the funfair at Blackpool'. . .Brian Hayles' original script is utterly unhelpful! It doesn't tell me anything whatsoever about the Toymaker except he's just stuck somewhere, which is never identified, playing games with the Doctor. . .Watching the programme made in 1966 it was alarming to think you could fill half an hour of television with a fellow and a girl and another fellow playing hopscotch - and there was pretty well nothing else in that episode. You couldn't dream of getting away with that today!"

GRAEME HARPER [D.W.B.#24/25, 1985 Summer Special]

"I do recall the first episode going out in the distant gloom. I'm afraid Kennedy's assassination was much more important - it left the biggest mark on me. . .I did phone(Douglas Camfield)occasionally and say, 'Listen, guv, I've got this problem - can I come and talk about it ?', and he would always listen. . .I thought THE CAVES OF ANDROZANI(script) was brilliant! Why I liked it was that it had a lot of action, good characters and a good story to offer a good class of actor. . .I was terrified! I mean it was so good!. . .Each of the people I approached liked the script enough to say yes right away. . .I regret not using the glass Dalek as the monster which killed Natasha and Grigory. Afterwards I thought 'Why didn't I take an oblique shot of the glass Dalek and use that as the monster ?' I don't know why I didn't think of it, but I didn't, so tough!. . .When I was rehearsing that particular scene - in fact it was Terry Molloy who said to me, as he was up there on the top of those stairs and we'd been talking about Daleks being able to hover - and that was the whole point of the new white ones, and he said 'Why don't you make Davros hover about Orcini on the ground ?', and I thought what a brilliant idea, of course that proves the whole thing - that says to us if he can do it, so can Daleks. So, from now on, Daleks can now hover and float downstairs and they don't have to have ramps etc. And that's why, later, we had a monster-sized one hovering above Natasha and Grigory. . .Seeing it at DWASocial 5 recently, on a big screen, I thought 'God, how powerful'. It was very powerful because it was larger and the music was terrifying. . .I wasn't totally pleased with ANDROZANI. Now, I think, I could handle it in a different way. . .I would like REVELATION to have been a bit faster I think, and a bit more action."

NICOLA BRYANT [D.W.B.#28, November 1985]

"The one contention I probably have with DOCTOR WHO is costumes for the assistants. I've had interesting mail like, 'Do you really dress like that?', and the answer, of course, is NO, I don't!. . .I just could not believe it(the cancellation))or understand it because we had the scripts, we had plans for the next season. . .The thing in unfounded. I think it's wrong and unjustified. It's not a thing about the BBC, it's basically a sort of one person decision. The BBC have been very good to me and I've enjoyed working for them and I hope to continue to do so. It's just I found that there didn't seem to be anyone asking 'Why ?', and anyone getting the right response back. I don't think there was enough questioning about it really."

MICHAEL BRIANT[D.W.B.#29-30 & 31,1986 Winter Special & Jan'86]

"If you asked(William Hartnell)to press the wrong wooden button on take-off he'd say 'Oh ! You can't go pressing that wooden button - it'll never take-off if you do that ! There is a proper procedure: you move this wooden handle here, then you move that wooden handle there, then you press that wooden button. If you operate the TARDIS like that, Michael, you're absolutely stupid'. But the bloody control panel looked exactly the same all the way round ! It was a real hoot - William Hartnell was convinced that the TARDIS actually flew. . .DOCTOR WHO as a show has proved that it is the character - DOCTOR WHO - that's important, and is bigger than any one person. . .Bill believed he was the only actor in the world who could play DOCTOR WHO and he was wrong. . .I've sometimes thought, when I've watched DOCTOR WHO through the years, that it's got into the hook of making any excuse for an effect - an explosion, a fight and anything for a bit of violence - and that's a shame. These things have to grow out of the story. There's nothing wrong with an effect - I believe in effects tremendously - but you have to say, like with THE GREEN DEATH, the result of this pollution is giant maggots, so therefore how can I present the maggots in the best possible way in these circumstances - NOT what can I do to jazz up this story ?. . .The Sea Devils ended up being derived from turtles. I wanted to have lots of shots of them actually swimming under the sea but that never happened. . .Every time there was a maggot shot or sequence we would just approach the problem differently. . .We even had blown up contraceptives as maggots!. . .I think DOCTOR WHO is a special show, and I think it is also a show in which you should take risks as a director. It is not a show where you are paid to come in and do the job and photograph it and do things as normal work and walk away from it. For me, it was a show where you were paid to come in and try things out and experiment. I don't think anyone would have thanked a director for coming into the show and just doing the same things, story after story after story. . .I was saddened the first time I saw the Doctor using a gun- I thought that was a very bad step. . .They(DEATH TO THE

DALEKS)were in a pretty sad and sorry state and badly needed a new paint job. My memory of it was that I went back to the Daleks as I knew them in the William Hartnell days and I think I had them repainted in that scheme because that was my memory of them. . .John Scott Martin careered off the end of the track at 30 miles an hour and crashed! I shouted 'Are you okay ?', but before he could say anything the next two Daleks came catapulting into him!. . .We got the remaining couple of Cybermen out of store and they were absolutely knackered and they looked desperately old-fashioned. . .You've heard all the stories about the ghost, and of Lis almost drowning, but I actually think, in retrospect, that we were suffering from a form of oxygen starvation. A film crew is about 60 to 70 strong, and to fit that many people into a cave that has no natural air supply(Wookey Hole)is asking for trouble and you will start having accidents and making mistakes because you are suffering from a lack of air. . .We decided that the entire ship(THE ROBOTS OF DEATH)would be in art deco, all the costumes were to be art deco, and we even decided to have art deco robots as well! Because why not ? Why always have robots looking like the Tin Man ?. . .When I was phoned up to do another DOCTOR WHO I was just always doing other things. I would just dearly have loved to come back and done another one. Graham Williams phoned once. . .I remember Graham Williams getting very cross with me, because he said 'You've got to come and do another DOCTOR WHO, I insist!'. . .And gradually people stopped phoning me and it's as simple as that. It really is as simple as that - they just stopped calling. Yes, I love DOCTOR WHO, I think it's great. If I'm free and I'm offered a DOCTOR WHO, of course I'd be thrilled to do it, especially after(10)years."

JOHN NATHAN-TURNER *[D.W.B.#29-30, 1986 Winter Special]*

"There will be an official announcement within the next fortnight as to the shape of next season(the 23rd). That information we haven't had for very long, and so really it's a case of waiting for the new scripts to come in, to ensure that they're better than the stuff we had on the shelf. . .I don't think I've become complacent at all and I don't think any of my team have become complacent. . .(Q: 'WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO BE WORKING ON THE PROGRAMME IN 1988 ?') Oh no, no. . .He(Colin Baker)'s determined to play the Doctor for seven years and one month. . .As I said earlier, we've got more than enough(scripts)to choose from now, some 38 scripts. . .I do promise you a stunning Season(23)next year. The hiatus has given us more time than we've ever had or that anybody has ever had on the show, to think and act accordingly on what we want to do when we return. If something's been off for 18 months, when it comes back it's got to be sensational. . .I'm not saying(Season 22)was gratuitously violent, no. I think what we should have done was change the character of Shockeye to something other than a chef. . .You've been reading your DOCTOR WHO Bulletin! Absolutely no truth in that whatsoever(sic)! No, I think that would be stupid, absolutely stupid. No point in that at all, no. Absolutely no plans and no truth(in destroying Gallifrey at the end of Season 23). . .The(THE TWO DOCTORS)script was actually written and delivered for New Orleans. For hacienda read plantation house; for olive grove read the banks of the Mississipi; and for the old town of Seville read the French quarter of New Orleans. . .It would seem pointless to me next year to pay for(THE NIGHTMARE FAIR)all over again when I could start from scratch and have another script. . .The movie industry is in fact bombarding us with offers at the moment. . .I've persuaded(BBC Video)to bring forward the next release, which is THE TALONS OF WENG CHIANG(sic), to January, but we are having censor problems now which is something we've never encountered before. The programme's always been granted a 'U' certificate, and now they're granting it a '15' certificate, providing we cut two sections! Otherwise it's 'PG' so we're having a battle at the moment. . .(Regarding the completion of SHADA)The first year I took over, being fairly selfish I got 28 episodes through that year and I wanted them all to be mine!"

CHRISTOPHER BARRY *[D.W.B.#32, March 1986]*

"Obviously I was flattered at being asked by Verity Lambert to be one of the initial directors and delighted when I saw the scripts and the potenial of it. . .I think THE ROMANS was very naive. . .Looking at it the other day I was appalled at some of the things I'd done. . .We decided it would be okay for(Patrick Troughton)to put his feet on the running board of a Dalek and cling on the back of it, so it was travelling around with him on the back which was both comic and, in its sense of danger, was acceptable. . .(Roger Delgado)had a wonderful face and he didn't have to cod it to look menacing, he just was, whereas I felt the more recent manifestation of the Master was, well, wasted in the scripts completely. One story I saw I thought was an appalling waste - he needn't have been in the thing at all!. . .When it came to THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS videogram I've only myself to blame as I assumed it would be the version that I'd seen on the air, so when I was asked to sign the agreement I did so unhesitatingly. Subsequently I was presented with a copy - after lobbying Enterprises - and was rather upset at some of the cuts that had been made because I think some of it makes nonsense - some of it just doesn't flow at all. . .The cast was good and the acting was good - the monster(THE CREATURE FROM THE PIT)was the problem. . .I'm obviously held partly responsible and the visual effects department had to take some of the responsibility for it. We had an inquest on it afterwards. . .In the studio we saw this great, green penis coming round the corner and everyone roared with laughter. . .By this time Tom had got so much into the character that I found him a little bit harder to control and overbearing. At rehearsals one day I shut up, stood by him and waited till he'd finished expounding how the scene ought to be played, bless him. He'd done it so long he thought he knew it better than we did, but there was no personal animosity about it - it's just a bit embarrassing for the director who suddenly finds himself taking a back seat with his cast!. . .Why bring in Kate O'Mara(MARK OF THE RANI), unless it was just a giggle ? You see, I think these things are just 'showbiz giggles' a lot, sort of 'Wouldn't it be fun to have...'. . .I was (mis)quoted as saying 'This(THE TRIPODS) is the new DOCTOR WHO', and of course John Nathan-Turner was very rude to me the next day."

PHILIP HINCHCLIFFE *[D.W.B.#33, April 1986]*

"I felt affection for the show but it's something I did a long time ago. When I did interviews I found it took up my time and I didn't get a lot of return. It's all in the past. . .I think the show has lost its grip on the pubic imagination. Whether that's because it's not made as well or because it's run its natural life I wouldn't like to say - I haven't watched it in detail recently so I can't comment. . .I would like to see the programme judiciously repeated. . .TALONS is not that frightening - I find it all a bit silly really."

DEBBIE WATLING *[D.W.B.#34, May 1986]*

"I remember the first day's filming we did. . .My father, I think, was killed and Frazer rescued me. He had the most immortal line, though, can I say it ? This house was full of passages and corridors and we were running away from the Daleks, and I came out in this Victorian frock and I saw Frazer and he went 'Quick, Miss Waterfield, up your passage!'. . .The first line Frazer ever said to me in DOCTOR WHO - and we cutit it!. . .I do remember watching the rehearsal in the studio of the Cybermen coming alive and it gave me the screaming hab-dabs!. . .I was doing the Dave Allen Show at the time(of THE FIVE DOCTORS)for Thames, and I thought 'Oh dear, but I've GOT to do the series because it's better for my career'. I turned down DOCTOR WHO. Halfway through the series it was cancelled so it was never shown so I missed out on both."

WILLIAM RUSSELL *[D.W.B.#35, June 1986]*

"The first story seemed to us to be absolutely extraordinary because we went back to the Stone Age and the actors had to do Tarzan-like acting. We could hardly rehearse it, we all laughed so much!. . .The first time I realised(DOCTOR WHO)was going to be successful was picking up a copy of The Evening Standard and seeing a cartoon of General De Gaulle as a Dalek!. . .I remember we did the first episode all over again because Sydney Newman came and saw it and said 'Do it again'! . . .So that wasn't a pilot - it was an attempt to get it right the first time!. . .We met and discussed the script on Monday and rehearsed it and went into the studio on Saturday. It was all within a week and we had Sundays off. . .What mattered was whether the story was good, whether they kept to our characters, whether we would react in that way... These were the things we were concerned about mainly. Billy was concerned whether 'Doctor Who' would do this or that and so on. . .I needed a change. Billy was furious: 'WHAT!?!', he said. He was absolutely livid! I understand he was never as happy with the series after Jackie, Verity and I had left."

DEREK MARTINUS *[D.W.B.#36-37, 1986 Summer Special]*

"Bill Hartnell - a very nice bloke, an awfully nice chap - was getting, well, a little difficult, and he used to say 'Well, DOCTOR WHO can't exist without ME', and so on, and he made some very unreasonable demands and the decision came about that perhaps he would not be asked to continue. . .And so it was rather sad that I had to 'bury' this poor chap as it were who said, ho, ho, that 'DOCTOR WHO couldn't exist without ME', because it then went on to Patrick Troughton and of course many others after that!. . .(The Dalek)looks terrific, but it can be made to look pretty ordinary as well if it's not shot from the right sort of angles. I can't remember what the right angles were at the moment but it can look pretty ordinary because there's not much visual variety about a Dalek really, marvellous thing though it is, and one had to be careful how you shot them. . .(THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS), looking back, had all the classic ingredients really of a very good sci-fi story. It had a sort of larger-than-life grandiose feeling to it and when you get a script like that you feel you can offer it to people like Marius Goring. . .

INNES LLOYD *[D.W.B.#36-37, 1986 Summer Special]*

"Whoever was doing DOCTOR WHO was leaving and Sydney Newman said 'I want you to produce DOCTOR WHO', and I said, 'I don't like science fiction at all - in fact I dislike it intensely!' He said, 'Well, you either produce it or you don't say!'. . .I got to love it and anjoy it - it was great fun. . .(William Hartnell)was going to sign the contract, and it may have been the thought of doing 40 more that made him suddenly reconsider. . .I said to Sydney, 'Look, there's a limited run in(producing)this show', because if you do it for more than 3 years you would get awfully stale - you needed to get a new idea, a new mind. . .I think you need to get out before you get so bored that you become complacent, but also indulgent. . .If they make a change I think Michael Grade would be wise to give it to a real Young Turk and say 'There's your opportunity!'. . .Paddy was one end of the studio and Bill the other and Pat was calling out things like 'Hello dad!', and Bill was saying things like 'The only man in the whole of England...' It was fun actually - we had a very good party that night!. . .(Bill)was very emotional then. It was the close of a chapter. . .Bill was in his fifties when he was twenty. He was that sort of man."

MIKE KELT *[D.W.B.#36-37, 1986 Summer Special]*

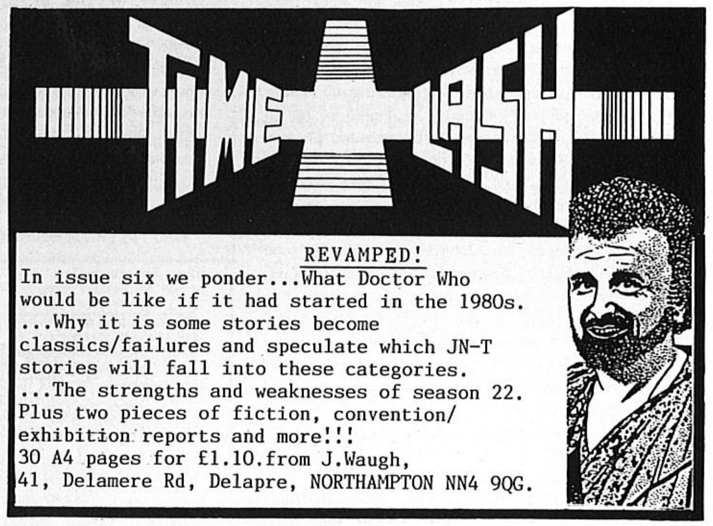
"(BLAKES 7)was another show with no time and no money. It's something the BBC have got to sort out and come to grips with because gone are the days when you could do a Blakes 7-type shot with a black circle round the Liberator. . .(Star Cops)is MUCH MORE expensive than DOCTOR WHO or Blakes 7 ever was. The budget is much bigger - there's no comparison. . .I worked on THE FIVE DOCTORS where I redesigned the console. Basically I was so pissed-off with the crap it was before. It took a couple of years to persuade them to spend the money. . .I wasn't given any guidelines as such. The only thing that was said was that I had to keep in the door handle, which was a big red knob. We had to keep the basic idea that it was hexagonal and that it had a thing in the middle which went up and down. . .What we were trying to achieve when we were designing it was to incorporate enough indiscriminate buttons and screens so that if anything was written into the script they could say, "Oh, this is that set of buttons over there", and thus avoid what used to happen which was people cutting into it and building in a unit which spewed out paper or whatever. . .I did some of Tripods for my sins. . .There is nobody in the BBC who can light a model."

NABIL SHABAN *[D.W.B.#38, September 1986]*

"It was in the original script that(Sil)was in a goldfish bowl but they decided that was too impractical. . .I would like to have done that because I had the idea that not only would I be(swimming)inside this goldfish bowl, but I would have snakes in the bowl slithering around me. . .I knew that the laugh had to be something special and it had to convey his malevolency. I didn't want to do the sort of witches cackle or the Master's 'Heh, heh, heh'. . .I missed the first episode of (THE DALEKS) because the children's home I was in, the staff wouldn't allow the kids to watch it because they thought it was too frightening. . .I had sent in a script I had written called 'Invasion of the Veridians', and then in 1980 I wrote to John Nathan-Turner suggesting myself as the fifth Doctor. . .I knew that the laugh was going to be the trademark of Sil in the same way that "Exterminate" was associated with the Daleks. . .I went to the read-through and I was really quite nervous because I didn't know what the reaction would be, but to my pleasure I found that everyone laughed and liked it, although I was a little disheartened when some of the actors thought it was my real laugh, but we made up afterwards!". . .They' d already book me to do the Ice Warriors story(before the hiatus)."

COLIN BAKER *[D.W.B.#39 & 40, October & November 1986]*

"I think the first episode(THE MYSTERIOUS PLANET)is smashing. I've seen it played back and I was very excited. I watched it with two or three of the actors who were in later episodes and they were all saying, 'My God You're quids in for your future now!. . .(JN-T)made it clear that, having seen me in an informal situation, he thought I had a kind of largeness of personal quality which he thought would be suitable for the part. . .I've spoken to Eric many times. We've had lots of chats about the programme, and he's never said to me that he thinks I was not very good as the Doctor. In fact he's said the oposite. He was very flattering and buoyant towards me. It makes me think that everything he's ever said to me is a lie. I think that if he had the guts to say to me, 'Look, I don't think you're right for the Doctor, Col', I'd have had a lot more respect for him now. But I think he's been a coward, and I would say it to his face. . .It is(JN-T's)intention to leave anyway. I know that he wants to leave the show, and he has wanted to for two or three years and he has been cajoled and persuaded to stay because the BBC knows when it is on to a good thing. . .My contract to do DOCTOR WHO runs out, I think, at the end of this month(August). . .(Bonnie Langford)is excellent - she's got lots of go. . .Pip and Jane Baker say that John Nathan-Turner is one of the best producers they have ever worked with in television in terms of the interest he takes in the scripts - his grasp of the scripts - which is not the impression Eric gave. . .I might get(a new producer)who is just a time-server, who does not give a damn about the programme and who commissions cheap, bad scripts. And he could say 'Stop arguing and do the scripts or I'll sack you'. That could happen. It could also happen that someone wth enormous energy, a new Douglas Aams or a new John Nathan-Turner, comes into the show. . .I thought the Celestial Toymaker script was super and I was really excited about that and I was very sorry when that was shelved." (TO BE CONT'D...)



REVAMPED!
In issue six we ponder...What Doctor Who would be like if it had started in the 1980s.
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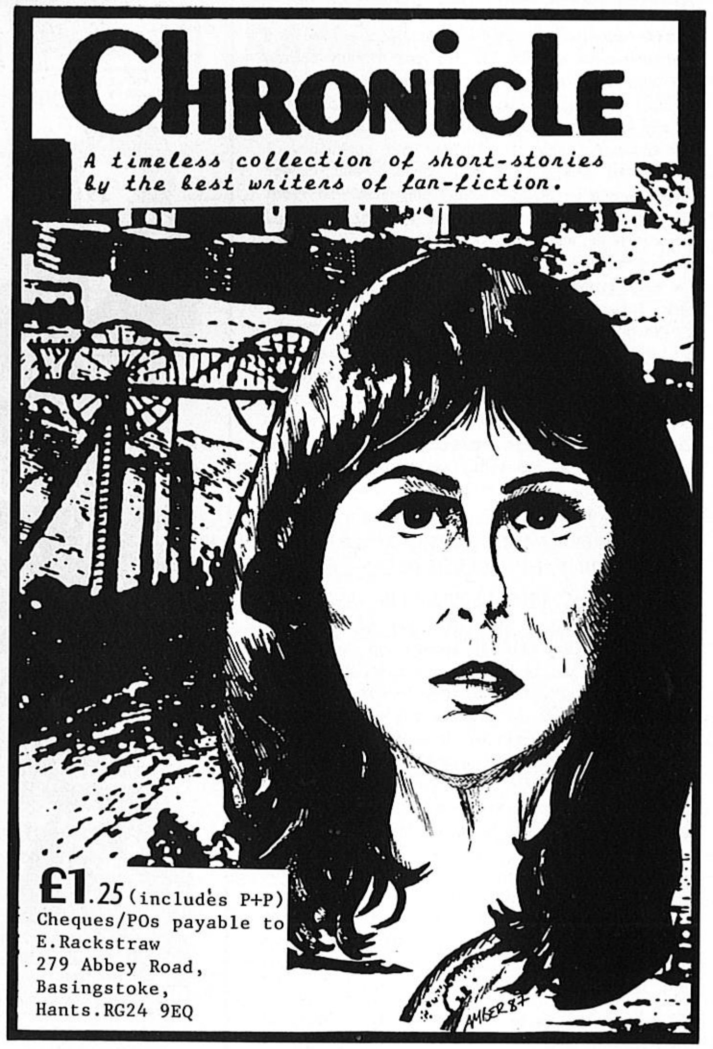
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by returning to the camp humour he jettisoned all those years ago. It seems especially strange that after violent, adult stories like CAVES OF ANDROZANI and REVELATION OF THE DALEKS he abruptly changed to MYSTERIOUS PLANET-style childish panto. Am I the only person who read the papers during the long postponement ? A certain Mr Grade publicly stated that the show was too violent, was losing younger viewers and needed more humour. The JN-T / Saward style was not suited to this, but I feel Cartmel's 'ingenious' fantasies are closer to what Grade wanted.

ANTI-JNT STANCE "PERFECTLY JUSTIFIABLE"

SIMON HARRIES, Dartford, KENT

Congratulations on reaching the 50th issue of DOCTOR WHO Bulletin, as always packed with interesting and informative news and articles. I started buying it from issue 24-25 while on a tour of the sci-fi shops of London and have missed hardly any issues since (I am endeavouring to obtain issues that I missed !). I like your magazine not only because it keeps me up to date with the WHOniverse, but because it has also helped me to see the light about DOCTOR WHO as it stands today.

Until I started buying D.W.B. I had to rely on the Marvel Monthly for info, etc. which to this day still panders to John Nathan-Turner and praises his rubbishy productions (TIMELASH, TIME AND THE RANI to name but a few). Some might say that a better word to use is "indoctrination" but I would not agree with them - your anti-JNT stance is perfectly justifiable and reasonable (my memory certainly isn't cloudy yet), and the way that you stand up for DOCTOR WHO so passionately - and the fact that you will not be gagged by the BBC or anyone else - is quite an accolade.

This is the gist of my letter: after the Open Air 'charade', Season 24 in general and John Nathan-Turnoff's apparent ineptitude, vanity and indifference to criticism, I want to assure you that you have my support for one in any action you may take, verbally or written, against JN-T and, although I cannot guarantee my presence at any demonstration outside TV Centre, I wish you the very best of luck in your campaign. I care about the DOCTOR WHO concept and cannot stand by and watch it being "decimated" in front of my eyes - I have watched it for as long as I can remember and it is my favourite TV programme. I believe that when JN-T started producing the series back in 1979/80 he totally changed it back into credible drama (with the help of Christopher Bidmead and Eric Saward), but now the situation has come full circle and JN-T's stories are now as corny and puerile as the last Graam Williams' stories, only worse !! The only way to reverse this ray-phase shift, this catharsis of spurious morality, is to get JN-T replaced by a competent, reliable producer who can return the series to better standards, if it isn't already too late.

JN-T IS "BURNED OUT"!

BOB FURNELL, TIME MEDDLERS OF VANCOUVER

I've just finished reading issues 48 and 49 of D.W.B.. After reading those two issues my initial reaction is "My God, what are they doing to DOCTOR WHO ?". In previous issues of D.W.B., the outlines for stories for the current season seemed quite interesting. However, up until now I thought DOCTOR WHO might have a somewhat brighter future with the casting of a new Doctor and with more interesting, original and imaginative scripts. Sadly it seems to be a dream on my part.

On reading the general views of the Brit fans, the stories sound to be dull, boring, unimaginative, hammy, O.T.T., etc., etc... I had to some degree, if prematurely, been looking forward to seeing Season 24 but now, well, I don't think I want to see it at all !

I personally agree with many Brit fans that DOCTOR WHO today is nowhere near the programme we all grew to love. Today, it is a third-rate piece of tripe that is even worse than some of the worst American TV (i.e. The A-Team, Dynasty...).

JN-T has become a tired, unimaginative, burned-out producer and he must go ! If there is to be a 25th Season with him producing then I can't look forward to it.

MISS COW STRIKES AGAIN !

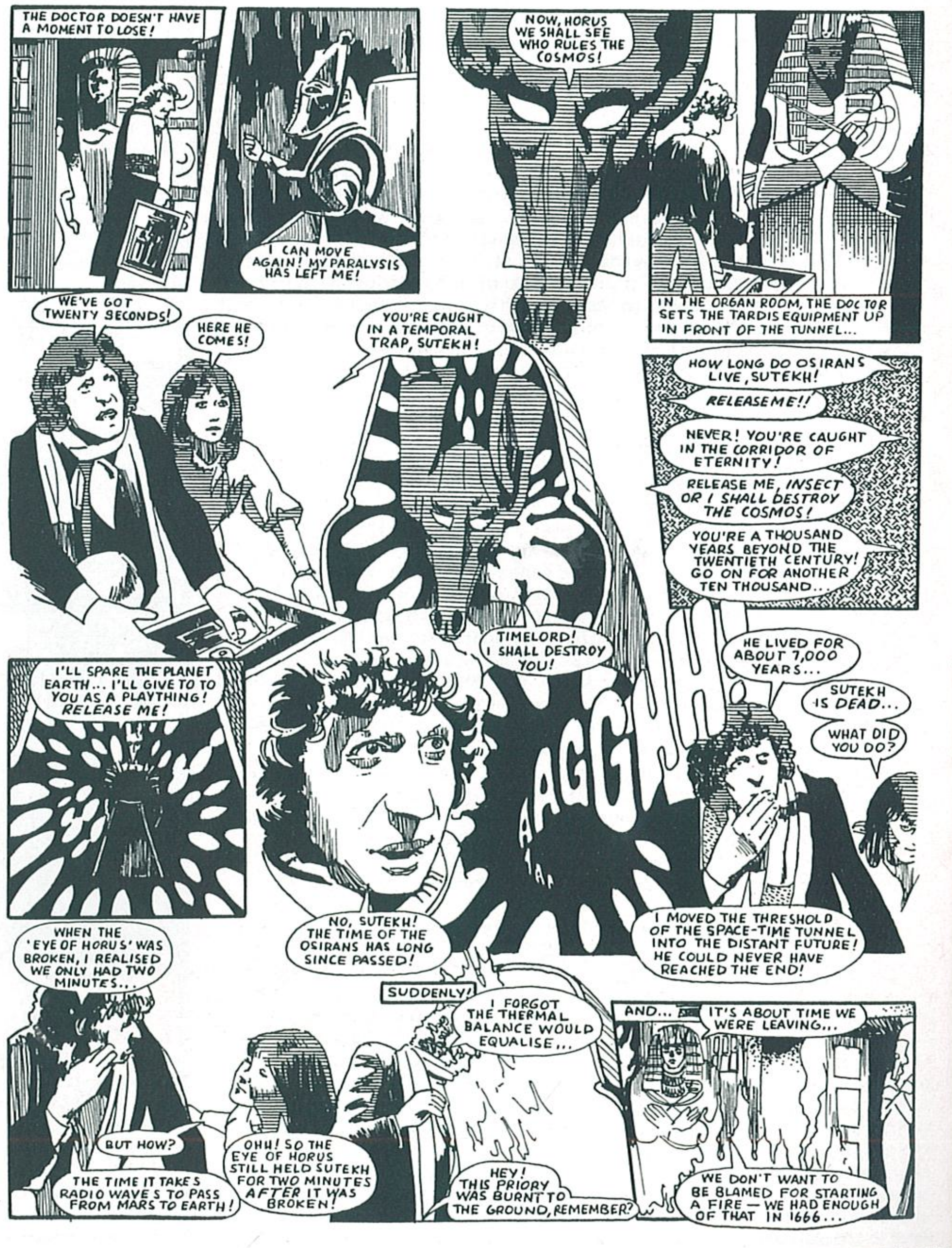
BRIAN GALLAGHER, Hammersmith, LONDON

You may be interested to know that I phoned LBC Radio recently with my views about DOCTOR WHO. This was The Pete Murray Show with guest TV critic Nina Myscow. What I basically managed to say was that the programme has degenerated from a ratings-winning serious drama to low-rated cheap pantomime. Nina Myscow agreed with me about the quality of the programme, but then annoyingly went on to remark how could I say it's a serious drama when it's a children's programme !! Before I could reply to this insulting remark I was unceremoniously cut off ! However this was because the news was coming up rather than any cheap BBC Open Air tactics. What really annoys is that I have to express my critical views on a station with no BBC connections of influences.

WAS TITAN EMBARGO JN-T'S VENDETTA ?

NICK COOPER, Leeds, WEST YORKSHIRE

The allegations of JN-T's pedantic behaviour over the Titan Books/Unearthly Child script(D.W.B.#49) literally left me speechless. I just cannot understand the sheer arrogance of the man and this just proves that he now couldn't give a damn about the series, except when it applies to his own bastardized travesties. It has been said that he wants nothing more to do with Fandom, but considering the originally intended publishing date of this book, it seems that even before PanoptiCon he didn't care enough about the fans to bother about childishly denying all of them a piece of merchandise he knew we would really want. In his Starburst interview, Eric Saward said that JN-T would "rather read a manuscript from W H Allen or spend hours piddling about with some crappy merchandise than willingly become involved in talking about what (they) were doing" (i.e. producing the series he's paid to produce). It seems this now even extends to worthwhile merchandse; in a market too full of grossly expensive cash-in merchandise (i.e. Cook/Pattern /Companions/everything Haining wrote after A Celebration...books), Titan's script series is a refreshingly welcome change - books fit to sit alongside Bentham's The Early Years and the CMS releases. JN-T can't totally wreck this series of books , but he appears to be having a bloody good try !


THE DOCTOR DOESN'T HAVE A MOMENT TO LOSE!
I CAN MOVE AGAIN! MY PARALYSIS HAS LEFT ME!
NOW, HORUS WE SHALL SEE WHO RULES THE COSMOS!
IN THE ORGAN ROOM, THE DOCTOR SETS THE TARDIS EQUIPMENT UP IN FRONT OF THE TUNNEL...
WE'VE GOT TWENTY SECONDS!
HERE HE COMES!
YOU'RE CAUGHT IN A TEMPORAL TRAP, SUTEKH!
HOW LONG DO OSIRANS LIVE, SUTEKH!
RELEASE ME!!
NEVER! YOU'RE CAUGHT IN THE CORRIDOR OF ETERNITY!
RELEASE ME, INSECT OR I SHALL DESTROY THE COSMOS!
YOU'RE A THOUSAND YEARS BEYOND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY! GO ON FOR ANOTHER TEN THOUSAND...
I'LL SPARE THE PLANET EARTH... I'LL GIVE TO TO YOU AS A PLAYTHING! RELEASE ME!
TIMELORD! I SHALL DESTROY YOU!
AAGGHH!
HE LIVED FOR ABOUT 7,000 YEARS...
SUTEKH IS DEAD...
WHAT DID YOU DO?
NO, SUTEKH! THE TIME OF THE OSIRANS HAS LONG SINCE PASSED!
I MOVED THE THRESHOLD OF THE SPACE-TIME TUNNEL INTO THE DISTANT FUTURE! HE COULD NEVER HAVE REACHED THE END!
WHEN THE 'EYE OF HORUS' WAS BROKEN, I REALISED WE ONLY HAD TWO MINUTES...
SUDDENLY!
I FORGOT THE THERMAL BALANCE WOULD EQUALISE...
AND...
IT'S ABOUT TIME WE WERE LEAVING...
BUT HOW?
THE TIME IT TAKES RADIO WAVES TO PASS FROM MARS TO EARTH!
OHH! SO THE EYE OF HORUS STILL HELD SUTEKH FOR TWO MINUTES AFTER IT WAS BROKEN!
HEY! THIS PRIORY WAS BURNT TO THE GROUND, REMEMBER?
WE DON'T WANT TO BE BLAMED FOR STARTING A FIRE — WE HAD ENOUGH OF THAT IN 1666...
THE END

ONE NEWSPAPER ARTICLE we neglected to include in our collage of press reaction to our OPERATION WHO campaign appeared in The Daily Telegraph on November 24th. The reason we didn't include it was NOT because of its insulting attitude to DOCTOR WHO fans (I, for one, am not an overgrown schoolboy in my early 30s but a normal 22-year-old who didn't actually start watching DOCTOR WHO religiously until episode 1 of THE HORROR OF FANG ROCK !), but simply because The Daily Telegraph was not targetted in our campaign in the first place due to its past equally poor record of support for DOCTOR WHO.

Now, maybe I'm just being paranoid, but to me the whole article reeks of a BBC collaboartion since I'd dearly like to know how The Telegraph obtained D.W.B.#49 in the first place, DOCTOR WHO fans are painted as lunatics, and the article insanely concludes by suggesting there's nothing wrong with the series as a "slightly camp inter-stellar variety show"!

Doctor Who's darkest hour?

Charles Spencer finds all is not well aboard the Tardis on its 150th adventure

LAST NIGHT **Doctor Who** (BBC-1) celebrated its 24th birthday and the eponymous time-traveller (Mark 7) emerged from his trusty police telephone box to begin his 150th adventure. A cause for good cheer and congratulations all round, one might have thought. Not a bit of it. After seeing off the Daleks, the Yeti, the Cybermen, The Master and a host of other intergalactic nasties through the years, the good Doctor now faces his toughest test yet—the enemy within. The Tardis is a very unhappy spaceship indeed.

Two years ago Michael Grade did the unthinkable and dropped "Doctor Who" from the schedules. He complained that it had become too violent and decreed that the series should be "rested". The decision was met with predictable howls of outrage and this autumn "Doctor Who" returned, with Sylvester McCoy in the title role. It is, however, back on sufferance, its future by no means assured. The audience of 4.7 million is substantially below the figure for previous series and Grade's final word on the programme's future, before he dematerialised from the BBC, was that the jury was still out.

All this might be bad enough, but our hero also has to face the scorn of former friends. The very people one would have expected most warmly to welcome "Doctor Who's" return have turned on the series with a virulence which, to the outsider, if not the programme's producer John Nathan-Turner, is richly comic in its intemperance.

Mr Gary Levy, the editor of D. W. Bulletin, the "Doctor Who" fan magazine, has described the present series as the "most appallingly produced ever" and while not going quite as far as to call for a Dalek-like extermination of Nathan-Turner, he wants him sacked. Nor does he rule out the possibility of demonstrations outside the BBC if such action is not taken.

Another of the Time Lord's disillusioned fans, Ian Levine, has written a detailed article in D. W. Bulletin denouncing the present series with almost Stalinist fury. "We are more than aware of the rot inside (Dr Who) that has been silently corroding away the magical essence of a once quite simply brilliant concept, but attempting to campaign at the BBC for a better series over the past couple of years has been like banging our heads against a brick wall," he wails. Hell has no fury like an overgrown schoolboy scorned.

Some of the whingers were wheeled out on Sunday's "Did You See?" to lament the decline of the series. Perhaps deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, Mr Nathan-Turner bottled out of making a personal appearance. It was no surprise to see that most of these aggrieved "Doctor Who" addicts appear to be in their early 30s, the same age as myself. Like me, they probably caught the first programme before their 10th birthday; unlike me they have remained terminally hooked ever since—once I went to boarding school at the age of 13, my encounters with the programme were irregular.

It is easy to understand the programme's enduring appeal. Even after 24 years I can remember the wonder of that first episode, when the vast interior of the Tardis was revealed. One friend of the same age confided that he can still recall feeling horribly left out at school because he had missed the first two programmes. We would never have admitted it then, as we rushed around the playground, one arm rigidly extended, shouting "I AM A DALEK" in our high-pitched voices, but I suspect that most of us were genuinely terrified by the programme.

I remember sitting on the sofa in a state of delirious anticipation as the wonderfully spooky theme tune struck up. Being particularly wimpish I was almost as frightened of the first Doctor Who, William Hartnell, with his long white hair and unpredictable temper, as I was of the Daleks. It was a great relief when he was regenerated into the kindly and whimsical Patrick Troughton.

I went away to school during Troughton's era (1966-69) and after that never found "Doctor Who" quite so deliciously terrifying. Nevertheless I remained in intermittent contact with the series, though Jon Pertwee (1970-74) struck me even then as being excessively actorish and mannered.

Tom Baker, who followed him in 1974 and continued until 1981, always seemed to me to be the ideal Doctor Who. Combining authority with eccentricity, he had Pertwee's flamboyance and Troughton's charm. He managed to inject a wry humour into the programme without making it any less exciting and when he left, "Doctor Who" was never quite the same again.

The move from the long-cherished Saturday tea-time slot to weekday evenings was a bitter blow and the fifth Doctor Who, the squeaky-clean Peter Davison (1982-83), never succeeded in stamping his mark on the part. But at least he was better than Colin Baker who came over as positively obnoxious. I only saw a couple of the episodes featuring him and thoroughly approved of Michael Grade's decision to put the show out of its misery.

But what of the seventh—and much reviled—Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy? Is the programme really as bad as its *soi-disant* admirers claim? On the evidence of last night's programme "Dragonfire" and an earlier episode I caught, engagingly starring Ken Dodd as the lurex-clad operator of magical mystery tours through space and time, I am at a loss to understand what they are moaning about.

The show certainly has its tongue more firmly in its cheek than before and there are undoubtedly moments of the "panto antics" of which the old brigade so bitterly complain. But using the usual low-rent sets, the narrative still moves forward at a cracking pace and the writing is sharp, successfully negotiating that most treacherous territory between comedy and suspense.

Sylvester McCoy is an appealing Doctor, with a genuine sense of wonder and a nice line in irony, though he could possibly do with a little less whimsy . shade more authority. The winsome Bonnie Langford may not be everyone's dish of Angel Delight as his sidekick but she produces a terrific scream when confronted with monsters, and that, surely, is the essential prerequisite of any of the Doctor's female time-travelling companions.

The baddie in the present series, an ice-cool customer with plans, would you believe it, for intergalactic domination, manages to spit out such cherishable lines as "my power shall be absolute" with almost heroic conviction and there is attractive support from Tony Selby as the dodgy wheeler-dealer Glitz, an Arthur Daley of the fourth dimension, and Sophie Aldred as a spunky heroine.

Some of the jokes are a bit self-conscious, some of the acting as iffy as ever, and I suppose there's no denying that the thrill-count is lower than it used to be. But I find myself warming to the idea of "Doctor Who" as a slightly camp inter-stellar variety show and indeed enjoyed the first episode of "Dragonfire" so much that I immediately reran the video. I may be a lone voice but I, for one, am perfectly sincere in wishing the present Doctor Who many happy returns.

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aliens~the pantomime

BY THE STANDARDS of Season 24 DRAGONFIRE was really quite good. It was the only story which came anywhere near to recapturing the unique atmosphere of "real" DOCTOR WHO, instead of the cosily bland pantomime which has characterised this season, although on the other hand it fails in comparison with, say, PARADISE TOWERS - the latter turning the gaudy panto style of 1987 WHO to its advantage, creating a deliberately extravagant and crazy story, whilst DRAGONFIRE tried, albeit in vain, to break free of its sloppiliy produced confines by returning to the show's previous strengths of atmosphere, plot and credible characterisation. As a result there's a jarring clash between Ian Briggs' original basic story and detailed characters, John Nathan-Turner's pantomimesque production and Andrew Cartmel's increasingly obvious preference for reducing the show even further into fairytale. DRAGONFIRE is a gaudy and silly pantomime, just like the rest of Season 24, but unlike the other stories one feels it should have been far more than that. This story actually had incredible potential, yet again destroyed by an incompetent production team.

One prime reason for its failure is the frankly atrocious portrayal of the Doctor. Only PARADISE TOWERS has so far managed to imbue Sylvester McCoy's Doctor with any notable presence, dignity or genius. Stephen Wyatt's Doctor was a powerful figure with depth; a man whose clownish facade occasionally slipped to give a tantalising glimpse of a very hard-edged alien with a phenomenal mind which would surely be enlarged upon as the season progressed. But character continuity seems to have gone out of the window and in both BANNERMEN and DRAGONFIRE he came across as flat and one-dimensional; the clowning no longer a facade but his only characteristic ! One wonders what Mr.Cartmel is being paid for... In DRAGONFIRE as in BANNERMEN the Doctor contributes nothing to the plot except wandering around observing events. It is even left for the villain to kill himself! Thus the seventh Doctor is thoroughly boring because he never seems to get involved. The quickfired, scientific genius of his predecessors is totally missing (due, perhaps, to the removal of all 'real' science and the arrival of fairytale magic under Cartmel), and generally he strikes me as a tedious wimp. A clown. Give me Davison's fascinating, multi-faceted Doctor any day !

Yet there is no reason for any of this. TOWERS made him into a powerful, central character, far removed from the irrelevant imbecile of DRAGONFIRE. Sylvester can't be blamed for his poor performance when everything has been left to him, with Cartmel and his writers offering no support, no written depth and no character at all. Sylvester has, however, made a good job of a thoroughly bad lot. In DRAGONFIRE he goes way over the top , ruining several scenes with his ghastly overstressed "R"s, silly walks, facial contortions and, of course, that bloody umbrella but, giving him the benefit of the doubt, I suspect this is because he recognises (but who could fail to ?) the flat, superficial nature of the writing and so feels the onus is on him alone to make his role entertaining. Alas, Buster Keaton antics only end up making him look very stupid.

It's a pity the Doctor himself comes out of DRAGONFIRE so badly because, if one overlooks the major flaw in the logic of the entire thing (i.e. if the Proamons were so keen to imprison Kane on Svartos, why didn't they hide the Dragonfire on the sun-blasted side of the planet, or even a completely different planet ?), there was (gasp of sheer amazement) a decent story in there. Unfortunately the Doctor scarcely came into contact with it, instead occupying himself in getting into surely the inanist cliffhanger imaginable. It only served to insult the intelligence of the viewer (and to provide a corny write-up in The Radio Times for episode 2). Another highly irritating aspect of his Doctor is how he never deduces anything for himself. In this case Daphne Oxenford's superb cameo as the archivist tells him a bit of the plot, Kane tells him the rest and the starcharts fill in the gaps ! How convenient for the new Doctor - no need to strain his brain at all !

This aside, Ian Briggs made a promising debut, albeit constrained by the now customary whimsical layer of saccharine which subsequently destroyed his story by the time it reached our TV screens. Briggs is undoubtably capable of greater things - if freed from the shackles of JN-T and Cartmel's All Singing, All Dancing Laughter Circus In Space. His finest talent seems to lie in his creations of detailed, credible characters who, unlike others this season, aren't just there to be funny. This bunch, especially Belazs and Kane, were fleshed out in some detail, written straight and even played for real. The exploration of Belazs' past was fascinating and gave her motivation which, on the whole, characters have lacked this series, whilst Kane was pleasingly complex, unpredictable and sinister; easily the finest villain in a lack-lustre season.

The story is too muddled and too confused for its own good, strengthening my feeling that it was submitted as a 4-parter and BANNERMEN as a 2-parter. It was nice to see the plot roaring into action so early in episode 1, but thereafter it was too rushed and episode 3 was downright chaotic, with Kane's suicide being far too easy and quick and Mel's departure reeking of last minute desperation.

Cliffhangers don't appear to be Briggs' forte either. Part 1's was an insult to all intelligent viewers , and its absurd resolution was even more ridiculous !! As I've said, the worst problem (other than the cramming of the story into 3 episodes) is the clash between Briggs' style and that of the production team. Cartmel evidently has no clear grasp of science and so uses naive fairytale magic; it was present in the biologically absurd finale of BANNERMEN and here it pops up in the excuse for how Ace got to Iceworld. For a start, Cartmel can't even get his fields of science right - time travel is physics surely, not chemistry ?! And, oh, so time/space travel is so easy that a 16-year-old 'A' level chemist can discover it by accident, eh ? Makes one wonder why Rassilon and Omega wasted all those centuries slogging their guts out to discover its secret, doesn't it ? Then, of course, they really hammer home the point - Ace's real name is Dorothy. Wizard Of Oz, geddit ? Ha, ha, Andrew, ever heard of subtlety ? No, I suppose you haven't.

DANIEL BLYTHE: I would say that of the four stories of Season 24, only DRAGONFIRE came anywhere near to being worthy of DOCTOR WHO. I am not one of the ever-increasing number of fans who decided not to watch parts of this season (I always live in hope), but it's reached the stage where I wouldn't mind too much if I accidentally missed an episode. One of my friends who watched some of this season had last seen DOCTOR WHO years ago, and needless to say she has decided never to watch again after this year's farce.

How is it that three substandard stories in a row can result from months of work ? Below par stories in the past have usually had some reason for their lack of quality, e.g. the production team were short on money and time (THE UNDERWATRE MENACE) or were experimenting with effects that didn't quite come off (UNDERWORLD). But there can be no excuse for Season 24 given the amount of time and, we are led to believe, care, that was lavished upon it ! Any chance of your interviewing John Nathan-Turner so that we can hear what he has to say for himself ?

FREDDIE WRIGHT: At last, a decent story in this dreadful season. If not ending the series on a high, it still restored at least some respectability to the show's shattered image. Of course, DRAGONFIRE had its awful bits; Sophie Aldred's character just has no chance of succeeding. If JN-T believes words such as "Ace" are 1987 "street cred", then it proves he is living in his own little egotistical and sheltered world. Also, the inexplicable ending of episode 1 was too unsulting and unprofessional for words. However, at least DRAGONFIRE seemed to take itself seriously - a decent plot with interesting twists, especially the ending to episode 2 with a "What will happen next ?" cliffhanger. The acting was also fairly good, especially the brilliant Edward Peel. Yet it's sad when a fairly average story is the hit of the season.

JONATHAN BURT: Fortunately DRAGONFIRE was much better than anything which preceeded it this season. It had its obligatory bad points - especially the idiotic cliffhanger to part 1 and the seat-belts in Glitz's spaceship - but its better points , I felt, outweighed the bad . The usual vein of juvenility was absent from most of the script and the plot was sound and absorbing, at least until the last 5 minutes. Of course, best of all was Bonnie leaving, although this scene was handled dreadfully with no explanation for her desire to go off with Glitz. Surely it can't be love ? We are left to speculate the reason because none was provided. The scene was badly directed and APPALLINGLY acted - a common complaint in scenes suffering from Bonnie Langford. A most disappointing finale.

And what of Ace ? Sophie Aldred seems to be a competent actress, quite pretty if slightly fat - quite unlike Bonnie fortunately. As an actress she is a vast improvement; one doesn't cringe every time she is on screen. However, her character is just so unrealistic - no 16-year-old still says "Mega", "Ace" and "Go for it". The companion is again badly planned and researched - typical of JN-T really.

OWEN RICHARDS: Oh dear, what a mess ! I was starting to like the first episode, despite the confusing cliffhanger. Unfortunately things went from bad to worse when a ledge mysteriously generated itself under the Doctor, allowing Glitz to save him from an almost certain sprained ankle. On that note, we can mention the handy inclusion of a fold-up ladder in Ace's trendy wardrobe of accessories. I can imagine future scenes reminiscent of Mary Poppins with our heroine pulling spacesuits, robots and even the next companion out of the cavernous folds of her relatively dimensional carpet bag !

The direction was a big step-down from Chris Clough's previous story. I can't believe that the same person directed this - was he in the loo while this was before the cameras ? The bit where Clough tries to out-do Ridley Scott (the ant hunt in episode 3) was embarrassing in its sheer lack of style in comparison to the cinematic version. The lighting was the worst in memory as well, with every snowy cliff and icy expanse shown in all its polystyrene glory.

MAXWELL ROWAN: Like the stories before it, I had high expectations, but what a shoddy piece of work it was. Tacky, unrealistic sets, ham acting and the obligatory comic script. The only good points were Dominic Glyn's atmospheric music and a very good opening performance from Sophie Aldred who is a thousand times more preferable than Bonzo ! And what a terrible ending - totally contrived and out of context, and the title is a bit vague;'Iceworld' would have been more fitting. It was also the perfect story to see the Ice Warriors return - another lost chance !

RICHARD FITZGERALD: DRAGONFIRE Had one or two good points: Sophie Aldred made an excellent, if occasionally overstated debut, reminding me of the days when companions resembled real human beings rather than overgrown Shirley Temple clones. Kane is an excellent, if surprisingly under-the-top supervillain. It's just a shame he, and all his henchmen, are lumbered with those silly helmets; the sort of things one would imagine being worn by Kaiser Wilhelm's traffic wardens. All else was sheer drivel, from that pathetic shot of Iceworld as a globe with a big lump of ice stuck on one corner, the freezer centre joke (didn't we all split our sides), the absolutley insane attempt to re-enact the Star Wards Cantana sequence, the TV studio look possessed by Iceworld's lower depths, and the cliffhanger ending (geddit ?). Yes folks, before your very eyes our hero will, for no reason whatsoever, climb over a railing so he can hang by the tip of his umbrella over a vertiginous drop. The Doctor has been portrayed as many things in the past - but never before as a congenital idiot !

Star Rating

53%*

SCRIPT	***
ORIGINALITY	**
DIRECTION	**
ACTING	***
SETS	**½
COSTUMES	*½
MONSTERS/ENEMIES	***½
SPECIAL EFFECTS	**½
MUSIC	****
OVERALL STORY	**½

This utter bilge is pure Kiddies Fairytale Annual stuff and clashes obtrusively with Briggs' very credible creation of Iceworld, the cryogenics and Kane's metabolism. The story's timing seems a bit far off too - surely a normal star wouldn't go supernova within a mere 1,000 years of Kane's departure, leaving a neutron star within a further 2,000 years ?

Perhaps because the characters were so well-drawn on paper we got far better acting this time, certainly in comparison to the rest of the season. Star of the show was Edward Peel who was marvellous as Kane and absolutely perfect for the role. He was the finest villain in DOCTOR WHO for a long time; cold, hard, sinister and predictable, and probably the only aspect of Season 24 that will have come anywhere near to sending the kiddies scurrying behind the sofa.

As for the regular cast, well, Sylvester was bad but improved slightly in part 3 during his confrontation with Kane. Bonnie Langford was patchy - I don't think she's been as bad as some claim but she does go right over the top in scenes which call for real emotion. She teamed up relatively well with Ace, proving yet again that two companions are better than one, but overall I can't say I'm sorry to see the back of her. All the same even she deserved a better farewell. Her awful parting scene was clumsy, utter gibberish and pathetically played by McCoy and Langford (do you believe Glitz would have tolerated Mel on his ship ?). Basically I want to know why she left - yet again this script provides no feasible reason whatsoever ! The basic idea of Ace is incredibly banal and riddled with the gimmickry (i.e. Gerry Anderson badges) typical of a producer who'll try anything in his vain bid to win an audience, but fortunately Sophie Aldred just about rose above all that and overcame even Ace's tiresome vocabulary of slang (again !) to create a three-dimensional character. She seems to have the ability for making gibberish sound half convincing and her talent shone through when Kane tried to make Ace take his sovereign with indecision written all over her struggling face. The difference between Mel and Ace is that I find I actually care for Ace. Okay, the idea behind her character is pretty pathetic, but Sophie Aldred and Ian Briggs help to make her work ("Last one back's a gooey mess"!). I just hope she doesn't become watered down next year - at present her character is strong and defined and even comes close to overshadowing the Doctor. To me at least Sophie Aldred is a welcome addition to a show whih badly needs her.

And finally to the production standards. Dear oh dear, Chris Clough again must be blamed for the plastic, unconvincing feel of this story. As with his predecessors, time and again a set would appear, beautifully shot, perfectly lit and shrouded in eerie mists, and really looking quite convincing...and within five minutes the lighting is turned up, the mist vanishes and the camerawork becomes hopelessly static, until by the end of part 3 most of the story was lit like Tescos ! CSO was atrocious, especially that 'cliff' (I'm still trying to work out how Glitz and the Doctor got down the abyss to indulge in that stupid bout of clowning around which was perhaps meant to be humorous ?). The initial impressive appearance of the dragon was ruined when followed by a 'cliff'hanger devoid of tension, and episode 3's obvious attempt to pay homage to Aliens was ruined by the glaringly bright lighting and static direction. Again Clough has let us down badly: his unquestionable talent was still evident in many scenes (the beginning of episode 1, for example), but as many other scenes were feeble and so destroyed the overall effect. Because of the inconsistent direction, I find it hard to judge the design, since sets which appeared superb in one scene could end up looking like a heap of plastic rubbish in another. Generally I think design was good but needed more sympathetic handling. The best set, and one which was consistently impressive, was the main cryogenic chamber. This was superb, especially in the shot in part 1 which revealed its massive height and upper levels.

Modelwork was generally crude, especially the spaceshot of Svartos (Iceworld must have played havoc with its orbit!) which relied on Dominic Glynn's awesome, majestic music to carry it. Indeed, Glynn's score was superb throughout. Effects-wise the shots of the Nosferatu's take-off varied from extremely good to utterly awful, whereas the highlight was the realistic, and therefore controversial, face-melting sequence, which was thoroughly gruesome.

Costumes were wholly ludicrous, notably the bland white uniforms of Kane and his men with their psuedo World War I German helmets. Apparently these uniforms were black Nazi style in the original script, playing up the political parallels which the production seemed desperate to tone down. I can't think why, after all, Nazi parallels were acceptable 12 years ago and Cartmel happily allowed the series to clobber the masons in PARADISE TOWERS and South Africans in BANNERMEN...so why not Nazis ? The most crushing embarrassments were the milkbar (not exactly the Star Wars cantina, eh ?) and the Freezer Centre, surely a Cartmel addition - what the hell does an Iceworld need freezers for anyway ?! - and the Starchart set (straight out of a Hamley's Christmas window display!).

The dragon was spoilt only by the manner in which it was lit and directed after its effective initial sequences. Like so much of part 3 it was an attempt to do an Aliens, but Chris Clough isn't a James Cameron and so this potentially excellent costume - far more sinister than the Tetraps - was not used to best effect, especially when it had to carry that nauseating little girl around - speaking of whom would have been far more acceptable had she not been dressed up as a Shirley Temple clone, but I can guess who's to blame for that ! Other scenes spent aimlessly following her around (Newt she ain't !) were an utter waste of valuable time which might have been better spent showing a more credible end for Kane.

I did like various aspects of DRAGONFIRE. It was the only story this season which came anywhere near to being a drama production, although it was still a long way off, and there were hints of a quality reminiscent of yesteryear. Sadly, like the rest of this abortionate season, there was much more which was, frankly, bloody awful, but this points to the already well-argued problem with today's DOCTOR WHO. The good elements and talented people are being held back by a tired producer and a script editor who seems to have wandered into the wrong show. The show's drama is continually and fatally undermined by the suffocating blanket of whimsical banality and self-consciousness (typified by the stupid question marks) which DOCTOR WHO has been saddled with. DRAGONFIRE as a story deserved a lot, lot better, so does Sylvester McCoy, and so, I think, do we...-TIM MUNRO

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